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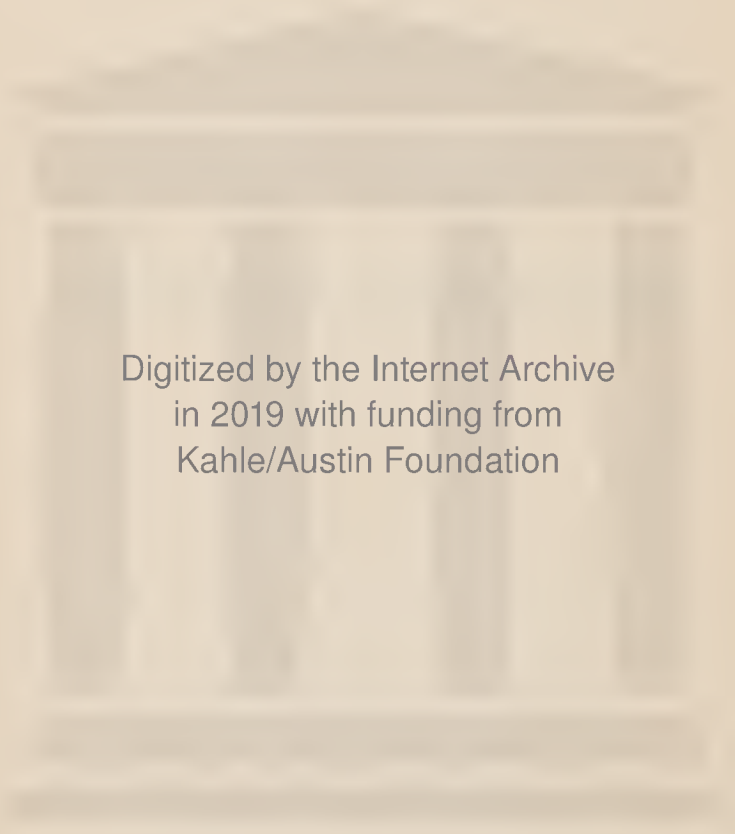
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DELILAH PLAYS THE PONIES



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DELILAH PLAYS THE PONIES

BY

W. A. FRASER

*Author of "Thoroughbreds,"
"Bulldog Carney," etc.*



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Delilah Plays the Ponies

I.

Static

STATIC, that joyous rainbow of bricklaying, that laughing god of awryness, whispered to Delilah, "Sit here in the reception room and I will deliver into your hands Samson."

Static meant Delilah's husband, Stewart Owen.

It must have been a seer who had christened her Delilah, for she was blessed with all the physical equipment to play the role. Spanish, one would say; but she was American—from the West, where so much that is beautiful has its being. The arched, thin-pencilled lines above extraordinary eyes, and the warm glow of rose on the olive cheeks, so like the blush on a graft mango, might suggest a Semitic ancestry; but the nose, straight and thin-chiselled, contradicted this deduction. The lithe figure had the sinuosity of a Hindu nautch girl.

Static did not keep Delilah waiting. A hotel page swung through the reception room calling, "Mr. Owen!" and at a snap of the lady's fingers handed her a telegram.

Delilah looked at the yellow missive thoughtfully; then ran a thin finger under the flap carefully and extracted the message. As she read, the black Spanish

eyes burned like knobs of red amber. She took a card from her hand bag and copied:

*Mr. Stewart Owen,
King James Hotel,
Toronto.*

*Meet Stella six-forty train from Buffalo without fail.
Love.*

Nevada.

She placed the telegram back in its envelope, resealed it and asked the young lady at the counter to call a page.

As Delilah turned away the young lady shot a knowing look at her assistant and said, "Did you see her eyes, Sudbury? They sent a shiver through me. Somebody's in for it. I guess it's beauty boy—Mr. Owen."

When the page appeared Delilah said, "I'm going out. Have this telegram placed in Mr. Owen's box."

Then she passed up the marble stair to a corridor that looked down upon the foyer, took the card from her bag and reread it.

"Meet Stella!"

There was no Stella in the rolls of Owen's family or her own; in fact, there was a paucity of relatives on both sides of the house. Delilah's mother loomed almost solitary in her genealogical retrospect, for together they had fought the wolf, Delilah passing from one occupation to another. It was from behind a counter in a Spokane department store she first had seen Stewart Owen. The big athletic handsome chap had breezed in, a smile on his dark face. That was two years before.

No, there was no Stella with a conventional claim on Stewart; but Delilah knew the big boy she had married, and she was as imperious, as exacting as Cleopatra—not unlike the Egyptian lady.

The disturbing factor of the telegram was, who was Stella and who was Nevada? "Love" and "meet Stella" were quite in hubby's best style. "Nevada"—assumed to hide the sender's name. Undoubtedly Owen had been having a delicious time before Delilah's arrival from the West three days ago.

Then the lithe figure draped forward over the marble rail as with free Western gait Stewart Owen swung across the main floor below, his soft hat slanted rakishly athwart his well-poised head. She saw him go to the office for mail, and over at the cigar counter open the telegram. He appeared to read and reread it—seemed puzzled. Finally he put it in his pocket and entered the elevator.

Delilah waited ten minutes and then went up to their room. She had been shopping, she told Stewart as she took a seat by the window and proceeded to manicure her nails, waiting for her genial hubby to spin the fairy tale she knew was coming. He would keep the appointment to meet Stella; he was a broken reed where pretty girls were concerned. What form his excuse to get off at six-forty, the dinner hour, would take, was interesting her. A woman less like Cleopatra would have had it out there and then, with an embargo on meeting Stella; but Delilah wanted an embargo that would stop other Stellas also.

Presently Owen outlined the plan he had been concocting.

"Think you could dine alone to-night, girl?" he asked, solicitously.

"I might survive it," Delilah answered laconically.

"You see," he continued, "the Golden Oriole Mine fellows are down from the North, an' they want me to

dine with them at the club an' go right into that deal so's to be ready for the meeting to-morrow."

"Golden Oriole! Some bird, eh, Stewart?"

He shot a quick look toward his wife, but the dark Spanish face held nothing but a passing flit of humor. He knew his little wife and her passionate temper. He had half expected a flare-up when he spoke of leaving her alone, even if it were business.

"But, Tootie dear, why not invite these men to dine with us?"

The boy smile that had showed even white teeth in the mirror before which Owen was brushing his luxuriant hair faded; but he was a nimble-witted youth, and he quickly had it.

"Say, Lilah, do you want me turned out of the hotel, or else lose this deal? These boys have just come off the rocks. They ain't had a drink for a month. That's where I come in with my private stock. The prohibition jakes are my partners in this."

"I thought it was business."

"Business with a big B, girl. How d'you suppose I put through that Stikeen deal that got you 'em sparklers? Wasn't it because I was a good mixer?"

"And the Owen smile."

"Right you are, Lilah! I never got bog spavins trottin' with the professors in a college; but I got what's a heap better asset—I got to know men. When I was 'bout seven I was staked to a bundle of newspapers and told to get out and make good."

"What's that got to do with this?" Delilah asked in a bored voice as she polished her nails.

"Just this, girl: I've run with real men so long I

know how to take 'em. I'm after an option on the Golden Oriole."

"Chasing a bird, eh?"

"You're right, girl," he commented. "Every minin' deal's a bird, an' a wise guy is ready with the salt to drop on its tail. To-night 'em fellows will try to put me under the table, but little hubby'll be there sittin' up takin' nourishment when the rest are mellow. Just about that time I'll get that option for thirty days on the Golden Oriole, an' instead of it costin' me five thousand bucks, I'll 've give up five bottles of wine. See, girl, I've got a bunch waitin' to take over the mine at a million, and I get a commission of ten per cent. Then little wifie rakes down ten per cent. of that for lollipops. Get me?"

"Yes, I get you, Tootie. You're a wonder!"

Owen wasn't accustomed to much praise from Delilah, but he flattered himself that for once he had done exceedingly well.

"You won't be late—no all-night game of cards?"

"Sure thing, I'll be home! Well, I can't afford to throw away a hundred thou commission for the fun of going to bed early. I'm like the bird. If he'd catch his worm the night before he wouldn't have to get up so early. See? Guess I'll start toggin' up now."

"Dress suit?" she asked abstractedly.

"Why dress suit?"

"Don't men dress at the club? They used to in Denver."

"They don't here," and Owen passed into a clothes closet that was literally packed with expensive suits.

Delilah watched with concealed amusement his

fastidious selection of attire. Half-a-dozen suits were thrown on the bed and studied critically.

"If the boys just off the rocks are in for a pronounced pickle, why all this dude stuff, Tootie?" she asked presently.

"It's part of the game, girl. I know the value of clothes when a man's makin' a wealth play. Dig that ring with the six-carat rock in it out of the box. I'm goin' to wear this dark-blue suit with the small silver stripe," he commented. "Yank a drawer open and find me a pair of blue silk socks with clocks on 'em."

Finally he was attired—perhaps twenty-five per cent overproof; but something in his athletic build, his muscular springiness, the lithesome swing of his shoulders precluded a criticism of foppishness. He certainly was handsome. But under the circumstances, to the wife, fuming inwardly, this was not exactly a pleasing knowledge.

At six o'clock Owen said, "I'll go down to the floor now. Jack Andrews is there, and we're goin' to pull off a race to-morrow. Then I'll wander on to the club."

She let him kiss her, and Owen had no suspicion how close he was to having those strong white teeth sunk in his cheek. As the door closed behind Stewart, Delilah sprang for it like a roused tigress, turning the key in the lock. The suppressed passion that she had smothered for nearly an hour swept over her like a cyclone tears at the waters of Bengal's Bay. Her face was demoniac, ghastly white, against it the rouged lips like streaks of blood. She wreaked her fury on the inanimate habiliments of the offender, hurling the suits into the bathroom, his discarded boots, his collar, each stamp of her feet hushed by words of imprecation.

Owen's picture rested upon the dresser in a heavy frame studded with gold nuggets he had brought back from the Klondike. A swing of her sinewy hand and it lighted upon one corner on the tessellated floor of the bathroom, the impact shooting it out of shape.


In the hallway a bell boy, slipping along with a tray in his hand, stopped, cocked his ear toward the open transom through which hurtled expressed passion and sounds of disaster, grinned and took a swipe at the empty air with his clenched fist.

A literary psychoanalyst would undoubtedly have written that the furious beauty now sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands, with a flood of tears coming like rain after the mad clamor of thunder and lightning. Not so Delilah. She felt good, tonicked. Her velvet body rose upward, and through thin distended nostrils she drew a deep breath of relief. She felt good. She raised her tapering arms and with light touches rearranged her hair before the mirror. Then she brought forth the half-dozen suits of clothes from the bathroom and spread them on the bed with the same debonair negligence that Owen had used. She picked up the much-awry gold frame, banged one corner on the mosaic floor, restoring it somewhat to its former quadrangle.

Then she stood it on the dresser, and addressing the somewhat groggy portrait, said, "There, Tootie, the maid dropped you! But cheer up, there's a worse fall coming!"

She took a peep at her wrist watch.

"Coming Stella," she said, discarding her slippers for a pair of walking boots.

 A dark suit and a turban hat with a very heavy veil completed the outfit. She walked around to the elevator

that carried her down to the side entrance. Even here, with that animal cunning of which she was largely possessed, she walked a block before taking a taxi.

"To the front entrance of the station," she told the chauffeur. The gatekeeper, in answer to a question, assured her that the Buffalo train was on time; it would be in in five minutes—six-forty—on Track Six.

Delilah then passed through the gate and along the foot-bridge and halted just above where the passengers from the Buffalo train would turn to pass into the depot. She knew that she would see a tall figure in a dark-blue suit on the platform below. And there he was, with eyes trained on the two ribbons of steel that trailed to the west. Men were rushing express trucks out through the portal of the station, and on the platform officials were darting here and there; redcaps were scurrying out and a scattering of people lined the platform waiting for incoming friends. The man in the blue suit was a prominent member of this group—Stella was to be met.

With the heavy veil hiding her face, Delilah stood against the handrail and watched the giant engine puff laboriously up the track and past, the train coming to a halt just as the passenger coaches reached the bridge.

Then the stream of passengers flowed inward, the man in blue holding himself prominently in view and scanning importunately each girl who suggested Stella or Stella's type. Once or twice he even got somewhat deliberately in the path of girls who were unattended.

When the flowing stream of passengers had become attenuated, reduced to stragglers, a striking-looking girl, dressed not over plainly, hesitated just as she came to where Owen waited, put her suitcase down and looked

about with eyes that were undoubtedly possessed of expectancy.

"Stella!" Delilah muttered. "Gad, I know her class! I'd know her in a thousand!"

She saw hubby step up to the girl and raise his hat. Delilah could not hear what was said, but she saw a smile twitch the girl's lips clear of pretty teeth. Then she was speaking to Owen. Whatever it was she had said, it suggested that somebody else was expected, for she kept turning her head toward the station as if searching for somebody.

The passengers had all gone by now, and she saw Owen pick up the suitcase and march through the exit with the girl. They were lost to her view immediately, and though she hurried over the bridge into the main depot and down the winding stairs to the cab stand and car line, she did not get another sight of her husband.

However, Delilah was quite satisfied; she had seen what she had come to see. She was collecting souvenirs. She had, so to speak, a buried ace and could wait. She took a cab back to the hotel, went to her room for a tidy-up and then down to her solitary dinner.

But Static was working overtime.

As Delilah sipped her consommé she all but let the spoon fall, and no wonder, for two tables down was now seated, facing her, Stella.

If only the evil genie had been possessed of the misguided audacity to outline the broad shoulders and sporty head of Owen at the same table the little scene of temper of the afternoon would surely have been re-enacted in the dining room; but Stella was alone. Still, it was like Owen's stupendous arrogance to bring the girl to the King James. However, of course he was

in ignorance of his wife's knowledge of the telegram, and probably calculated they could use the hotel as a base from which to plan many little excursions.

Then she smiled into the tiny pool of consommé in its silver bowl as she thought of Owen's predicament for the next three or four hours. He'd be a Wandering Willie; he'd have to make good his bluff about the dinner at the club and keep out of the hotel. Evidently something had gone wrong in the Stella business. The solitary dinner of the girl indicated that Owen's plan of a dinner and evening together had somehow miscarried.

Then the Spanish face hardened, the pencilled black eyebrows drew down over the red-amber eyes as a sudden thought flashed to her mind that perhaps this was a bluff—they would meet afterward. But later this suspicion was driven from Delilah's mind, for she saw the girl reading a magazine in the corridor.

Owen also had dined in solemn isolation at another hotel. At nine o'clock he entered the King James by the back entrance, took a seat in the café, and summoning a bell boy told him to find Mr. Jack Andrews out in the rotunda. He added, "If anybody asks for me say I'm not in—anybody, see, Jimmy?"

He ordered a bottle of blue-print beer and from a flask multiplied it to two per cent. Presently he was joined by the Man from the Desert.

"Good evening, Andrews. Sit down and drink some of this horror," Owen smiled. "What about to-morrow, uncle?" he asked when the waiter had gone.

"Well, son, a man knoweth not what a day may bring forth," the Man from the Desert said solemnly, with a caressing sweep of his big hand down the gray beard.

"Still guessin', uncle?"

"Yes, hawse racin' is always guessin'. The certainties was all played out long ago. Jehu on the walls of Jerusalem hadn't no sure thing—he might've upset."

"Can't Drummer beat that lot to-morrow in the mile handicap?"

"I ain't got no excuse for him if he can't. He's as fit as a jack rabbit in the time of lean fodder."

"Then why all this mournfulness? Your voice seems to come up out of your boot tops, an' you ain't no croaker as a rule."

The patriarch took a gradual sweeping look at their surroundings, lowered his voice half an octave and said: "There's a hawse in that race—Condor is his name—that can mos' beat any man's hawse for a mile. If it was a mile'n' a quarter Drummer'd hold him; he'd race over the top of him at the finish as he's feelin' now. But Condor, if the money's ridin' him, can run that mile under 1:39 flat."

"Then he ought to win, uncle?"

"Condor oughter do a lot of things he don't do—that is, not too often, son. If Condor'd win every time he ought to he'd be three to five every start. But if you was to take a look at the form book you'd see he wins 'bout three races a year—at odds of twenty to one. He belongs to a kind-hearted man in Chicago, an' when he's cleaned out the books he let's em get theirs back from the sucker public."

"I get you, uncle. What price'll Condor be to-morrow?"

"He ain't started for some time, an' his last four races was bad. He never run up here before, an' a handicapper is gener'ly lenient on a strange hawse, 'cause

he's kinder only got his form to go on; he ain't had his eye on that hawse's performance in a race. That's why Condor's in at a hundred an' eight pounds to-morrer. Handicapped on one of his good races, he'd carry a hundred an' sixteen. Another thing, in his bad races he was rode gener'ly by Burkner; his last two good races he was rode by the owner's 'prentice boy, Binkle."

"A well-rounded-up combination, uncle."

"Yes, racin's tough enough without a man gettin' careless 'bout any part of it. Now Condor knows Binkle—I guess they sleep together—an' Binkle knows his boss well enough to ride to orders. He ain't old enough in the game yet to string with the books. He's got to tie to the man that's got his papers on him. An' Binkle is here—I see him this mornin'."

"If Binkle rides it'll mean they're out to win."

"No, it won't; it won't mean nothin'—it'll mean wuss'n nothin'; it'll mean more guessin', for Binkle has rode him some bad races too. I tell you, Mr. Owen, there ain't no man can outguess ol' Hummin' Bird—that's what they call Condor's owner, 'cause when he's on the wing you can't ketch him. Unless you can find out somethin' as to his money bein' down you'd bes' leave it alone."

"Well, the betting to-morrow ought to show it then."

"No, it won't. He won't bet a dollar here at the track. His money'll be plunked down in Buffalo, New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and at the las' minute. They won't get no time to wire it back to the tracks. Hummin' Bird an' his pals've got a smooth organization."

"A bunch of big crooks, eh, uncle?" Owen said.

"I don't mind a man, when he's ^{fe}sort of up agin it

with a big feed bill, easin' up on his hawse for a couple of races to get a good price on him; but it's this takin' the crooked end of it an' playin' it all the time, same's this Chicago bunch, that spoils racin', sends it to the bad lands," Andrews declared mournfully.

"Well, uncle, you're the doctor. We've cleaned up a couple of times. What'll we do? I won't put up any holler if I lose five thousand," and Owen grinned.

"But I would. I've got to take more care of your money than my own. You see, son, I've got to stay with the game, an' I'll always get mine back; but if a racin' man stings a bettor two or three times he quits."

"I get you, uncle."

"I'm gettin' old, son, an' I've got my eye on a leetle farm down in ol' Kentuck' that I kinder calc'lated on buyin' an' settlin' down on."

"Get married, Mr. Andrews?"

The patriarch coughed and stroked his beard.

"Hawses is bad enough, son. I mean," he added apologetically, "for me. I know hawses an' I don't know women. You got a purty wife, an' I guess 'bout half your worries is settled."

Stewart's strong white teeth gleamed in a fascinating smile. "Settled, eh? Yes, they're settled one way."

"As I was sayin'," Andrews added, "I figgered by bringin' Drummer up here for this circuit I'd come mighty nigh payin' for that farm. He's in a couple of stakes that'd half pay for it without no bettin', an' he's good jus' now. I've been nursin' him along, workin' him in his races. That's all they was to him—jus' workouts. I ain't throwed nobody down. When they asked me 'bout Drummer I told 'em he'll win if he can, but he don't seem to be as good as he was. He ain't

been in the money for four races. The boy ain't takin' him in his lap at all—jus' that Drummer needed all 'em races to get where he's at now. In this handicap to-morrow there's eight entries an' three good hawses, Condor, Drummer an' May Fly. The others don't count; they ain't no bus'ness there. Drummer can beat May Fly, an' I figgered that we'd clean up, 'cause I didn't know Condor was here till this mornin'. 'Em crooks don't advertise nothin'."

"Put the pen through Drummer's name then, uncle. Don't start him if you think Condor can beat him."

"The handicap's wuth three thousand dollars, an' I'd feel sore if I scratched Drummer an' Condor was a cold hawse, 'cause my hawse can beat the rest of the bunch. I'll jus' run for the purse if I don't get a whisper I can depend on. Anyway, I always figger that luck for or against in a race is as good as seven pounds. If Condor was to have some bad luck—get pinched off a couple of times, or pinned on the rail, Drummer might beat him. But I got to get up early an' go to the track, so I guess I'll go up to my stall."

"I've got to hang around for a while," Owen said, "because of this"—he drew the Stella telegram from his pocket and passed it to the Man from the Desert.

Andrews deliberated over the wire. He seemed to study it curiously. He passed it back to Owen commenting, "I guess women's wuss'n hawses."

"You see, I'm kind of hidin' out, uncle. I made a play to wifie that I'd got a minin' deal on, an' skipped down to the train to give this bird the once-over."

"Who's Nevada?" the patriarch asked.

"You can search me; and also continue on your detective work about Stella. They're new ones on me."

"Stella didn't turn up, eh?"

"There you are, uncle! I don't know. There was a princess got off. I stacked up against her with my just-the-nicest-ever, but she put up an alibi; she wasn't Miss Stella, an' wasn't looking for me; said she was looking for a redcap to carry her suitcase. Get me? Bein' in it an' all to the beans, so to speak, I grabbed the suitcase; but she popped on a street car with a fare-thee-well grin, an' I ain't seen her since."

"Let me see that telegram again, son." The old man seemed strangely interested in the few words typed on the yellow slip of paper. "Could it've been for some other Stewart Owen?" he queried.

"No, I asked in the office. There hasn't been a Stewart Owen in the hotel since that Frenchman discovered Canada."

"Come up to my room," Andrews said. "I've kinder got an idee. This telegram don't look like all on the surface. There's a leetle somethin' familiar in a couple of words."

Up in the room the gray-whiskered John opened a bag, brought forth an old leather pocketbook, extracted some papers that were soiled brown on their many foldings and laid them on the table.

"Pull up a stool, young man," he said. "Let's see if we can do some detective stuff. Fust let me ask you somethin'. D'you ever get any code messages 'bout bettin' on hawses?"

"No; I wouldn't know how to figure one out."

"You would if you had a key—these're keys. Another thing," he continued, "was you expectin' any word from any racin' man 'bout hawses?"

"Not that I recollect. You see, I'm always travellin'

with a pretty swift bunch, an' when we've had a few shots there's patter spilled to no end. Sometimes a fellow when he's mellow is goin' to send me a dog; another time it's a thousand shares of minin' stock in a new flotation. Nothin' ever comes of it."

"Give me that telegram," the Man from the Desert said. With the telegram on the table in front of him he compared, one by one, the dilapidated sheets of paper. "D'you ever do anythin' partic'lar generous for any racin' man, 'specially a feller you knew in Nevada?" he asked, looking up.

"Say, uncle, I've got a bunch of I O U's would stuff a pillow, but as to rememberin' who they're from I ain't got time."

"There's three words in that wire, son, that ain't got nothin' to do with a girl called Stella. There ain't nobody mutt enough to stick that word 'love' in there about a girl, an' I reckon if he knowed you well 'nough to wire you he wouldn't need to put in 'without fail,' would he, son?"

Stewart laughed.

"He wouldn't, pop."

"I thought it might be a code wire on a hawse. They gener'ly put in somethin' like that—that's the part to egg a feller on. I got a lot of codes here, but there ain't one of 'em is anythin' like that. I wouldn't give shucks for most code messages. They're gener'ly sent out by touts; an' often a tout sends out four dif'rent hawses in the same race, so's if any one of 'em wins he gets his rake-off from the bettor—gener'ly figgered at 'bout the proceeds of a flat twenty-five-dollar bet for him. But I'm so upset over this Condor hawse that I'm gropin' for anythin'.

"There won't nobody here at the course know anythin', but there might be a leak in Buffalo that the money was there waitin' to back him."

"Say, uncle," Owen exclaimed, "you asked me somethin' a minute ago. There was a bookmaker—Flannigan was his name—was flat broke an' I lent him a roll to go on with—two thousand iron men."

"Did you get it back?"

"You bet I did! He seemed to climb right onto the hogback of a lucky streak with that, an' he sent it to me from Chicago."

"Would he be likely to sign a wire Nevada?"

"You can search me, uncle! I'm no ouija board."

The old man sighed.

"I ain't got a code nothin' like that wire. Here's one that's got a word opposite each letter from A to Z. A man's got a hawse named John, f'instance. He'll write in his wire the word opposite J, then the word opposite O, then the word opposite N. That means the fust two and the last letter of the hawse's name. You've got a code same's he's got, an' you jus' decode the message by it. These other codes is mostly variations of that. But none of 'em works out that wire you got."

"Then this isn't a code wire about racing," Stewart declared. "It's nothin' like that."

"I ain't sure it ain't. This chap might be a leetle bit cleverer, an' made up one of his own away off from the others. The girl didn't turn up, did she?"

"I'm not so sure," Stewart declared with a grin. "I'm goin' to find that out. I got a hunch this princess is Stella right enough. She might've got wise that my wife is here, an' is stringin' me."

"Well, the more hawses you've got in your stable,

Mr. Owen, the harder you'll find 'em to manage. I'd stick to one if I was you."

"Uncle, you needn't worry none about Lilah lettin' me drive a team."

"Well, I wouldn't marry no woman 'thout I'd find one could handle me better'n I could handle myself. I'm goin' to have a try in the mornin' to find out 'bout that telegram. Let me keep it, will you, son?"

"Sure thing! I don't want it in my pockets; I'm too forgetful."

"I see lots of telegraph offices with a leak in 'em. Lots of 'em young fellers plays the races 'emselves, an' they gener'ly get onto these code wires. You can hardly put one through they can't read. If I can find out if anybody here's in the habit of gettin' wires 'bout meetin' girls on trains I'll make it wuth his while to lend me his code for a minute. If it ain't 'bout Condor I don't give a hang."

"Call up my room, old man," Stewart said, "an' ask for me. I just want to locate the little wife."

Owen heard Andrews ask, "Is Mr. Owen in? I want to see him mos' partic'lar." Then into the receiver, "Thank you, missis. Sorry to disturb you so late, but it's kinder important."

Andrews hung up and said, "You're down at the club with some minin' friends, Mr. Owen. I guess I must've got the missis out of bed."

Owen grinned. He surmised that wifie's answer had been right sharp at being disturbed.

"I'll go down to the floor an' hang round a bit," he said, "then I'll turn in."

"Well, good night, son. In the mornin' I'll try an' see what can be done."

Half an hour later Owen went to his room, having rehearsed a little speech explanatory of his return.

"The main guy wasn't there, Lilah. I guess he fell by the wayside pretty early. Connors is the only one could give an option, 'cause he staked the claim; an' as I couldn't get an option, I didn't want to hang 'round wastin' wine. The other fellows were goin' out for a joy ride, but I told 'em I was comin' home to sit by my own fireside with wifie."

"You're a wonder, Tootie," Lilah commented.

Strangely, Stewart's early return and his modified demeanor strengthened her suspicion that he hadn't been in the company of men just off the rocks; he possibly had been in the society of a lady.

The Castilian lady had a will as strong as her sinewy hands, and she clapped it down over the passion that was surging her blood hot. This was the chance she had been waiting for to trim Mr. Stewart to a standstill, as she worded it. Money came to Owen easily. He picked it up like fallen manna. He was a man born with a silver spoon in his mouth, also a beautiful set of teeth. It was somewhat as if Apollo, imbued with the spirit of Paris, had come back to deal in mine flotations as a bridge to amatory pastime, his boyish personality, plus the lure of gold, making his path a rosy one. His residence was No. 1 Easy Street.

But with all this, though he gave Lilah spending money with a lavish hand, she, clever as a whip, felt that a turn in the run of luck might come; and if so she knew full well that Owen's bank account would be surprisingly short. She could swim on the flood with him, but she had no longing for rocky shallows. More than once she had asked him, as a precaution, to put in

the bank a goodly sum in her name; but all she received was the joyous smile and a new ring or an expensive gown.

Now she lay awake for hours, threading these numerous beads on a string of continuity which was this chance to trim him to a standstill. It would cost him something to settle this matter when she had prepared her case.

The big boy at her side slept soundly, as babes should, dreaming of Stellas and horses and million-dollar mines. And all night, all about in the darkened sky, mental static was snapping and twisting the attenuated threads of their lives.

Next morning, Saturday, Owen met Jack Andrews at eleven o'clock. The patriarch had been out to the track to watch Drummer take his morning gentle work-out and to consult with his trainer, Bill Cooper. As they sat together in a quiet corner Owen could see that the Man from the Desert was still troubled. That thin-lipped mouth that was generally set in established lines when something definite was to be carried through now gave expression to various emotions. The steely-gray eyes travelled around in their sockets like loose marbles.

"That gol-hanged telegram has give me indigestion," Andrews growled. "The more I can't find out about it the more I want to."

"You've hit the nail on the head, uncle; you have got indigestion," Stewart smiled. "There isn't anything in that wire but just skirts."

"But there didn't no skirt turn up."

"Leavin' that out of it, uncle, what's the matter with it bein' a rig on me? Some dang Westerner that's been here with me perhaps has sent that from Buffalo known' that I'd fall for it, it bein' his idea of a joke."

The patriarch treated this sepia wash as though he had not heard it.

"When I come back from the course," he said, "I fought a tough mutton chop in there, then I got busy. I chummed a leetle with a bright boy at the cigar stand, an' mos' natural, me bein' an owner, we talked hawse; an' gradual I works 'round to information on a good thing. All over America I've found that, next to tobaccer, cigar-stand boys is mos' interested in a good thing on hawses."

"What'd you find out, uncle?"

"I didn't want to find out nothin' from him except did some of the boys that worked in the telegraph office dribble in sometimes with wise stuff that had come through on the wires. I had to go mighty pussyfooted, 'cause no cigar boy wants to get a telegraph boy into trouble. They stick together like a fleet of herrin's. I didn't find out nothin', an' I kinder thought I'd give my hair its anniversary, for there ain't a barber livin' that don't know more 'bout hawses an' bettin' than mos' race men."

"Gee, I thought you looked kind of spry this mornin'! That's it. You're ten years younger, uncle."

"It's too doodish," the patriarch opined. "I was so busy tryin' to find out somethin' I let him cut it too short. Well, anyways, I lay for the head barber, an' I guess he kinder hustled, seein' me there, 'cause soon's I climb into the chair he says, 'Nice day for the races, Mr. Andrews.' See? He knows I own Drummer; an' danged if he wanted to take pay for the haircut. I kinder let it leak that I could give him a pointer, 'cause I had a wire, only I'd lost my code."

"No wonder he cut your hair short an' didn't want to charge for it," Owen laughed.

"Well, son, that tonsorial artist he pulls out a drawer that's half full of towels an' shows me a dozen codes."

"And he had it, uncle?"

"No-o; nobody's got it! It's one of 'em things that to-day, after the race, a feller'll come up to me an' say, 'Why didn't you ask me? I had that code right in my pocket.'"

"Uncle"—there was a shade of pitying commiseration in Owen's voice—"there isn't any code. That wire isn't anything but a kid on me, or some other Johnny picked up the girl on the train."

"I got a hunch——"

"You've got indigestion, that's what you've got—an' a haircut."

"Wait till I finish. Then the barber lets fall the gol-darnedest jar I got for many a day. He's diggin' my scalp with his fingers, like he's harrerin' it up to plant potaties, an' his tongue's beatin' time to the jig he's playin' on my skull. He says, 'I shave Mr. Owen. I see you with him upstairs. He's some sport, that man. He couldn't put his shirt on without wantin' to bet you he'd get the collar button in fust try.' I hear him give a chuckle—then he says, 'Funny thing, his name's Stewart Owen, an' I shave a man his name's Owen Stewart. Dang funny, ain't it?'"

"Gad, uncle!"

"'An' does he play the ponies too?' I asks."

"'Bet your life!' he answers. 'He gets some good wires. He's give me sev'ral tips that went over.'"

"Did you trail Owen Stewart, uncle?"

"Soon's I escaped from that haircut I look up in the

phone book. There he is—just residence, no office. I calls up his house, an' he's out of town."

"Holy Mike!" Owen cried.

"Yes, sir, just that. I goes down to the telegraph office, shows the wire to a little chap there, says I can't make it out an' wonders if it's for me, Mr. Stewart Owen. He goes upstairs an' says, when he comes back, that he guesses it's for me or another man. 'What other man?' I asks him, an' slips him a couple of fat cigars. He gives me a cute little smile an' says that names is sacred an' he ain't dyin' to lose his job, an' he don't know the name anyway.

"I'm kinder onto what he's got in what he calls his head, an' I says, 'Son, if I could get this straight I'd win a carload of money. Then I'd meander in here to-morrow an' you 'n' me'd get terrible friendly.'"

"'You mean it an't 'bout a girl?' he asks me—'that it's hawses?'"

"I says, 'Son, look at me.'"

"He lamps me with 'em baby eyes, an' then says, 'I guess it ain't chickens, pop—wait a minute.'"

"He wasn't no judge, uncle," and Stewart showed his white teeth.

"Then he scoots up to the attic again. He comes back with, 'They say there's a gent gets wires 'bout meetin' girls, the names bein' dif'rent, but the wires bein' kinder alike always. They've figgered they was code telegrams on hawses. But, no sir-ree, that kid won't give the name away.'"

"But it was this Owen Stewart, likely, uncle, and perhaps I got one of his wires," Owen suggested.

"It looks like that, son, 'cause he mightn't want 'em

girl messages comin' to the house, an' as he comes here to the hotel a lot he'd have 'em sent here."

"Yes, the company has got my address here at the hotel, and p'rhaps they've just switched the names around at the telegraph office. What'll we do, uncle?"

"I guess, nothin', 'cause anyways it ain't no good to us it it ain't 'bout Condor. That wire may be for you from this racin' man that uses that code. He may be a feller you've done a good turn to, like the bookie you staked. He'd know you string with me an' we'd be down heavy on Drummer, an' is puttin' you wise to Condor bein' the goods."

"Well, you're the doctor. You give me the high sign—five thousand or five cents I'll see the ante," Owen said as he parted from Andrews.

Stewart and Delilah lunched together early. Later, up in the room, again there was the little tableau of Owen's fastidious decoration of his handsome form. Delilah watched this cynically, for she had intimated that she wasn't going to the races.

As Stewart harmonized the color scheme of his attire—suit pattern, hose, tie, utterly ruined by the profuse sparklers—he waxed insistent that Delilah should go the more determinedly she took the opposite stand. She was stringing him. She felt that hubby was just putting on a front—he didn't want her. Stella would be there—sure she would! But she, Delilah Owen, was not going—not with Stewart.

"Why should I go?" she asked petulantly.

"There's your ladies' badge to the club inclosure, Lilah," and he threw on the dresser the neat badge with a ticket attached for each day; a pretty thing with its gold cord to fasten it to a button.

"The club inclosure!" she sneered. "Who'll know me? I don't lend them a thousand at a crack. The high-toned dames'll swarm that grass lawn you talk about, and they'll give me the highbrow once-over. No, I won't go! I'm as good as they are if I stick right here and pay my way. Get me?"

"That's the way they breed 'em in the West, girlie. I don't know any of these dames or I'd introduce you."

"No, Tootie, they're too old and too fat for you."

And until Stewart had finished his sartorial endeavor the mental fencing continued. At the end he said:

"I've got to pull my freight, girl, if you won't go. It's quarter to two, and the first race is two-thirty. I've got to get down a little early, 'cause if Jack Andrews finds out something we're goin' to reap the sheaves on Drummer. There's a horse in the race—Condor—that's got Jack shiverin', 'cause he can beat Drummer, beat him to a fade-away. That's why I'm in a hurry."

"What time does the race start?"

"Oh, it's the fourth." Stewart spread a paper on the writing desk and consulted it. "Yes, there it is—Condor and Drummer in the fourth race. There's others in it that the suckers'll pile their good dollars into the machines on, but the race is between 'em two. We can't find out anything about him. He's dead to the world about nine times out of ten, but when he wakes up he comes home with the bacon—just breezes in. Jack thinks the telegram is ——"

Owen had been pulling a tight collar to connect with the button as he spasmodically spluttered this out—let it slip. Startled, he gasped, cursed the collar and went red in the face.

"What telegram, Tootie?" Delilah asked innocently.

"Why—why, Andrews got a wire about a horse, but he can't make it out, 'cause it's in code," he lied cheerfully.

"You mean, Stewart, that Condor can beat Drummer if the owner tries to win?"

"Sure he can, see?" and Owen took a big roll of yellow-backed bills from the dresser. "Here's five thou I was goin' to bet on Drummer, but not—not now. If we knew what that crooked gang was goin' to do I'd be on velvet; if they were out to win I'd bet it on Condor, and if they were just breezin' to-day I'd put it down on Drummer. Then if I won wifie'd get that sable coat without waitin' for the mine option," and he took a little pinch at Delilah's shapely chin.

He would have kissed her, but she drew back, saying, "Hand that in with the sables, Tootie."

"You'll get 'em, Lilah. Here"—he divided the bills—"here's two thousand bucks that I want you to put in the hotel vault. I won't bet more'n about two hundred on Drummer unless Jack finds out that Condor's not tryin'. Well, good-by, girl. Sorry you're not comin'," and he slipped through the door.

When the echo of Owen's springy footstep died away down the hall the mask of pleasant acquiescence Delilah had worn fell away. Hers was one of those finely chiselled faces that when unlighted by pleasant sensations becomes intensely hard, cruel. Her voice, too, even in the low tone of her audible self-communication, was rasping.

"'Come to the races, Lilah,'" she sneered. "With an ace up his sleeve! He's as shallow as a fry pan with the bottom warped up. And vain? Oh, Lord; it's a wonder he doesn't wear corsets!"

She put the two thousand dollars in her hand bag and placed it on the dressing table, saying mockingly, " 'Attend to this business for me, girl, I'm going down to meet Stella.' "

Her eye caught sight of Stewart's discarded suit lying in a crumpled heap on the bed. " 'And valet me, wife. Hang up my clothes!' "

She swept coat, vest and trousers into a ball and threw them toward the open door of the clothes closet. The throw wasn't exactly a Christy Mathewson over-the-plate heave. The trousers gyrated like the arms of a windmill, and as the coat sailed through the air upside down a leather letter purse fell from an inside pocket. She played Rugby with the clothes, booting them into the closet, and picked up the letter case.

Even under normal conditions Delilah would have investigated its contents, but since the Stella telegram she was letting no chance for information go by. The leather case contained a small blue print of a mine location and two unopened letters addressed to Mr. Stewart Owen. The first one she opened contained a letter from a man and Owen's I O U for four hundred dollars, written across its face the word "Paid." When she opened the second letter her figure went rigid. The first word that caught her eye was "Stella."

"Stella, eh? Stella! Hubby seems to have this skirt-chasing game down to a fine art." Then she read the missive.

She finally took a seat at the writing table, and with the letter and its contents in front of her busied herself with pencil and paper. She looked at the date. Evidently Owen had carried the letter around for two days, too unmethodical, too unbusinesslike to open it. But

he was like that. In the West she had found letters that had lain around his room for two and three weeks at a time unopened.

At last Delilah seemed satisfied with her notes and her investigation. She looked at her watch—it was two-thirty. There was no hurry. She could play cat and mouse with this *coup d'état* and settle the Stella account at the psychological moment. She placed the letter and her notes in her hand bag beside the crisp, opulent hundred-dollar bills, and purring, humming a negro ditty, leisurely incased her slim figure in a tailored suit of gentle gray. Delilah was strong on hats, and now she asked the mirror its opinion on half-a-dozen creations, finally yielding to the glamor of a wide-brimmed Parisian Gainsborough. It was simple, the sweeping lines and a rich plume giving it artistic grace, beneath which her olive face, half hidden, was fascinating.

Delilah was in high humor. She carried the exultant flush of victory. She addressed the groggy photo on the dresser. "How do you like me, Toots? How do I stack up against Stella? And to-morrow little wifie gets that sable—eh, Tootie?—and Stella pays the bill. Now I'm ready; now I'm coming to join the party at the races." Below she secured a taxi, telling the chauffeur to drive to the club entrance of the Grapevine race course. When Lilah passed through the gates to the club lawn she was almost swept off her feet by a stream of people hurrying from the betting room. The third race was on, the horses were going out.

The lawn was thronged with beautifully gowned women and men dressed in good taste. Opening day at the Grapevine course was a society function. As Delilah bought a programme at a booth, the man, in

answer to her question, said the third race was about on—two had been run.

She mounted five steps of the stand, and leaning against a handrail swept the lawn with her dark eyes, looking for Owen—and incidentally, Stella. Once she fancied she caught sight of him as the crowd surged back and forth as the race was being run, but the next instant he was swallowed up in the human maelstrom.

She sat down on the step—she was less conspicuous now. But still she could feel eyes on her—men's eyes. But she was not there to flirt. Her engagement, the engagement of her intellect, was with Tootie and his Stella.

Presently across the course the jockey board swept upward, on its top, "Fourth Race." That was the Condor-Drummer race.

Delilah consulted her programme. Yes, there they were. No. 1—that was opposite Drummer's name on the programme, and Kelly was the rider. No. 2—that was May Fly. So the numbers went on down to 7, opposite which on the programme was Condor, and on the board the jockey's name, Binkle.

This settled, she put the programme in her hand bag and brought her eyes back to the gay throng that paraded up and down, up and down the greensward. Some were seated on benches out at the front of the lawn, the ladies' parasols, crimson and green and blue and black, making it like a picture of fairyland. Everybody was smiling, everybody was chattering.

A tall, soldierly man, looking very proper in his cutaway morning coat, was the centre of a group of ladies, in his hand a silk hat out of which each lady picked a little folded paper with a horse's number on

it—it was a two-dollar pool. There was an almost continuous stream of men passing with hurried footsteps to the paddock and to the betting machines—the iron men, as they were called.

Down in the paddock Delilah could see the race horses, eight of them, being led round in a circle within a railed inclosure. But Stewart Owen was not in sight. She had failed to catch another glimpse of him. Probably he was down in the paddock at Drummer's stall consulting with Jack Andrews.

Presently, with a little clutch at her hand bag that suggested a sudden determination, Delilah passed down the steps, and following the men she saw hurrying along with money in their hands was led into a room below the grand stand, at one end of which were several railed-off passageways leading up to the issuers of betting tickets. Each passage already held a line of eager investors.

Delilah ran her eye rapidly over the wickets and took her place in the queue leading up to the twenty-dollar tickets. When by attrition she had landed at the wicket she passed through twenty one-hundred dollar bills, saying quietly, "A hundred tickets on Condor."

The rotund little man behind the wicket gasped. He took a startled look at the beautiful Spanish face of Delilah, then counted the bills rapidly and passed her out one hundred little bits of pasteboard bearing in many places and many designs the number 673. Deliberately Delilah looked at the number in front of Condor's name on her programme. Yes, it was 673.

As she turned away those who had waited in the line just behind followed her with their eyes. One portly gentleman pursed up his lips and whistled,

"Phew! Some bet honey girl put down!" A little sharp-featured man behind him said in a low tone: "That settles it for me! That's the owner's money—that's a commission—and when the money's down Condor always wins. I'm goin' to switch. My twenty bucks goes on Condor. He'll be ten to one!"

"Not with that two thousand bet on him out of one hand," the stout man objected. "It'll cut his odds to sixes."

When Delilah made her way back to the stand the steps were crowded, but out in front was a bench quite empty. As she sat there tapping the toe of her shapely boot with her parasol a casual observer would have thought her a very pretty woman more interested in the superlative set of her exquisitely tailored suit than in the great game of flying steeds. Over the heads of the men grouped in the paddock she could see gay-colored caps like a detached brilliant ribbon floating toward the course. The horses were going out.

With her husband, Delilah had seen considerable racing, and as Drummer passed with his long sweeping walk, turning his big honest eyes toward the thronged stand, the jockey and his saddle almost filling the space between the high withers and powerful long quarters, she knew that Condor would have to fight a stout-hearted battle or Tootie's two thousand dollars would never return.

There was a little shrug of her lithe shoulders, a cynical chuckle as she whispered, "If you win, Drummer, Tootie is fined two thousand for flirting with Stella. Some fine, boy, but it's coming to him!"

From Drummer her eyes bridged the other horses and landed on the one with the number 7 on the saddle-

cloth—that was Condor. A twitch of apprehension tickled her nerves, for Condor had no pronounced lines except angularity. He must have been seventeen hands high; his neck was long, its length accentuating its leanness; the head was just a matter of bone and skin. But the legs—the forearm—it was the forearm of a tiger, so big and hard-muscled—fibre, steel sinew, bulging. Peeping below the saddlecloth and back of it, almost flat against the stifle, were ribs, barrel staves—she could count them. And the thighs, long, let down until the cannon bones seemed ridiculously short, were like the forearms—gigantic; the hoofs big and round as saucers.

Perhaps because Delilah was a woman this suggestion of strength was comforting. This bizarre structure was somewhat in keeping with what Stewart had said—“If Condor is trying it’s all off—nothing can beat him.”

Granted that Drummer was what he looked and what Owen said he was, a brave, good horse with plenty of speed, the one to beat him must be abnormal. There was no question about Condor’s abnormality.

Two men eased their saunter just behind Delilah. She heard one say:

“By gad, Jim! Look at that giraffe—that’s Condor, the horse you made me put a ten-spot on. Just look at him! He’s not a race horse—he’s been yanked out of a fire reel. I’ll sell my ticket right now for two bones. Wish I’d gone down to the paddock before I bet.”

They moved away.

But in spite of this a sense of satisfaction possessed Delilah. All the long train of static happenings had guided her to just where she was, sitting there with two thousand dollars of Stewart’s money on that creature

that looked like a gigantic greyhound. If the horse won she'd have to take the money home in Tootie's coat pockets—if she could find him. If Condor lost Tootie could debit his Stellas with the amount.

A hand was laid on Delilah's shoulder. Turning her head she saw Owen and, just behind him, Jack Andrews.

Perhaps because Andrews was so close Owen simply said: "Glad you changed your mind, Lilah, and came down. Let's stand up on this bench and watch the race. They'll be off in a minute—they're at the barrier now."

It was a mile race, once around the course, and the barrier was just to the left, beyond the judges' stand.

"I'm watchin' Binkle," Andrews said. "I guess the monkey's tryin' to get away—there!"

It was Binkle's eagerness that had shot the camel-necked Condor through the webbing.

The other horses wheeled and went back twenty yards, while the assistant starter picked up the disrupted web and ran across the track to replace it. The starter, angered, pointed his finger at Binkle and bellowed a reprimand.

"Do that again and you're fined fifty! Go back, go back!"

"If Condor wins," Owen remarked, "he'll be ten to one."

Delilah's black eyes dilated.

"Twenty thousand dollars!" she thought exultantly.

"No, he won't!" the patriarch declared emphatically. "I heered somethin' just five minutes ago I don't like none too well. Cooper told me that Bull Connors see a two-thousand-dollar commission placed on him, an' they was smooth over it too. A flashy-lookin' dame—looked

like some big bettin' man's wife—coolly slipped the two thou through the wicket under Bull's nose."

"Then the owner's backin' him?" Stewart asked.

"Nary a back—not here, to cut their odds. There's been a leak. It might be a put-away—that the information was sent out on purpose to make it look as though he was backed an' they don't mean to win."

This time Delilah felt more apprehension than exultation.

Owen turned to her.

"See, wifie, that's what we're up against. Mr. Andrews wouldn't let me bet more than two hundred on Drummer, and I meant to bet five thousand."

The web, a slender stringer, was now taut again. The starter was bellowing, "Come on, you boys! Move up there, Kelly, with that horse!"

The little mare, May Fly, excitable, temperamental, was circling like a dancing dervish, the assistant starter clinging to her bit ring, while behind, the third man, with his bull whip, was snapping at her quarters.

Suddenly, so quick that it was like a trick with cards, May Fly straightened, with her nose almost touching the barrier. The assistant starter released his hold of the bit, there was a clang of metal in the starter's stand, the web shot out of view and the eight thoroughbreds sprang forward like unleashed hounds.

The whole stand, with its applauding thousands, vibrated with a muffled roar, and from the course came the heavy drum of pounding hoofs.

Like a frightened rabbit, or rather like a whippet, the little bay mare, May Fly, shot to the front, and at the first turn lay flat and smooth against the rail. At her quarter, hugging close, bobbed up and down the

lean, ugly head of Condor. As they swung around the turn the boy on Drummer took him back out of the fierce wrangle of struggling horses he was in and laid him against the rail, two lengths behind the flying mare.

"We got the wust of the start," Andrews muttered. "But the boy did a wise thing, 'cause the ol' hawse ain't no quick breaker. He'll hang right there an' none of the others'll cut him off. He'll beat the little mare. There ain't nothin' to it—he'll outstay her. An' Condor's got to run on the outside all the time now till the mare quits. He'll travel twenty yards funder'n Drummer."

Down the back stretch the three-cornered struggle swept on. The mare was a length in front of Condor; and lapped on the big horse, half a length back, glued to the rail, was the chestnut, Drummer.

"Kelly's a purty brainy little cuss," Andrews muttered from beneath his focused glasses. "He's lettin' Drummer keep a little closer to the pace than general, but he don't mean to lose that rail position. I told him not to mind the little mare, he could beat her in the stretch; but he don't calc'late to let Condor slip in ahead of him when May Fly gives up, which will be about when they swing into the stretch. See him gettin' ready?"

At the first turn at the lower end of the oval the boy on Condor let out a wrap. The big dun-colored horse lengthened his stride till his nose was lapped on the mare's quarter. But the chestnut, too, had crept up. His lean, outstretched head was at Condor's girth.

"Well done, son!" Andrews muttered. "That giraffe'll never get the easy berth, an' if the mare don't

swing too wide he'll be blocked. If Drummer can hold him even to the last sixteenth he'll beat him home sure."

Looking down the course they saw the splash of red and green and black and gold of jockeys' jackets swing into the long home stretch as if the three leaders were flat abreast. The bay mare had swung a trifle wide—they could barely see Condor for her form. And running so close to the rail that it appeared as if the jockey's leg must be crushed was Drummer.

"Here's where the race is settled between 'em two," Andrews muttered.

And still the little mare, now tiring, bore out instead of coming straight.

"Condor's done!" Stewart cried exultantly. "He's beat!"

For the big dun-colored horse had dropped back—even there they could see it. Then his weird head showed inside of the bay mare, clear of her; and a length, perhaps two lengths, behind the chestnut, Drummer, that was still galloping with that tireless stride, the jockey low crouched and quiet as a sleeping bird.

"My ol' hawse'll win—he can outstay that camel!" Andrews declared. Then he gave a sharp "Ah, quit it!"

For suddenly the green jacket atop Drummer lifted more into view, the green arms were shaking the chestnut up; and behind, the giant Condor, with mighty strides, was coming like a whirlwind.

"Come on, Condor! Oh, Condor, Condor!"

Owen turned his eyes on Delilah's face. "What's got you, girl?" he asked. "I'm backin' Drummer!"

He might as well have expostulated with the parasol. Her strong hands were clenched, her black eyes had gone

amber, her breast was beating at her bodice like a bird beats at the wires of a cage.

Gone was all that Indian stoicism, broken, smashed; she was elemental; she, Delilah, her wishes, the sable coat, more diamonds—all were embodied in that cry, "Condor! Condor!"

As if the giant horse heard her, as if mental static pulled him forward, he gained inch by inch. It was the stride, the terrible long stretching of those powerful limbs; and the boy, who knew him so well, sitting there apeline, just steadying him, just steadying him.

The stand held a roar as though it were a cage where tigers battled. On the lawn men jumped up and down like monkeys, trying to see the combat over the heads of the mass that lined the rail. Some ran and clutching at perfect strangers pulled themselves to a standing position on the benches. The air vibrated with tempestuousness, with cries of "Drummer!" "Condor!" "Come on, you boy!"

Once Andrews muttered, "It's anybody's race! Drummer'll hold him! Stick, boy, stick—that's his final rush! Stick to him, boy!"

"Condor's got him, uncle!" Stewart groaned.

"Not till the finish, son! Drummer'll come again!"

For the big dun-colored horse was surely in the lead.

Then voices were screaming, "Drummer's beat! The outsider wins!"

"Condor wins—wins—wins!" Delilah was almost sobbing.

"Well, I'm damned!" Owen cried in disgust. "Have you gone off your nut, girl?"

"No, he don't—not yet, not yet!" Andrews muttered. "Not yet!"

The "not yet" was drawn out into an optimistic cadence as the stout-hearted chestnut responded to one sweep of the green arm, one sting of the whip on his ribs. Half a length, a foot, now his head bobbed at the dun-colored quarter—but look! The giant horse leaned toward the rail as he raced.

"Pinched off, damn him!" growled Andrews.

The next instant they were galloping proppingly opposite where the three stood on the bench, pulling up.

Across the course the numbers were dropped into the little square—7, 1, 6.

Condor had won.

"You'll object, won't you, Andrews? Condor fouled Drummer—cut him off," Owen said.

"What's the use? I guess the best hawse won—he was in the lead. The judges'll figger it that way. No, I like to win by bein' fust past the post. Kickin' don't get you nowheres."

The lawn had turned into a playground for a disrupted hill of ants. Men cantered here and there, turned, twisted and ran back again; women tore up betting tickets and threw them on the grass; a florid woman with face wreathed in a triumphant smile clutched at an acquaintance crying: "I had Condor—two dollars on his nose! I'm going to buy a hat with the money!"

Stewart held out his hand to the patriarch.

"Uncle, I've got to hand it to you. Your hunch saved me five thousand bucks."

"I was a le-e-tle afraid," Andrews answered. "I guess Drummer feels wuss 'bout it than I do. He most hates to get beat, that hawse does."

Owen turned to Delilah.

"You're a funny kid," he said. "Did you forget I was bettin' on Drummer when you was rootin' for Condor?"

Before she could answer across the track a red board carrying the word "Official" was placed below the numbers of the three horses.

Delilah ignored Stewart's reprimand, and presently Andrews was saying, "There go the odds. Condor pays six-forty to one."

Delilah opened her bag and taking out a sheaf of cardboard tickets handed them to Owen, saying, "Cash these for me, Tootie dear. I had two thousand on Condor."

A hundred below zero could not have frozen the two men stiffer than Delilah's quiet announcement did John Andrews and Stewart Owen. The old man looked at her out of blue-glazed eyes; a big hand held his gray goat-like beard in a lingering grasp as though he clung to a rope. And he had alluded to her as a flashy-dressed dame!

Stewart opened his mouth and closed it. He looked at the tickets—all he could hold in his big hand—673—yes, that was Condor's betting number, and "\$20" was printed on each ticket.

"Great Scott, girl!" Owen gasped. "You win twelve thousand eight hundred! Where'd you get the tip?"

Delilah handed him the copy of the Stella telegram, and attached to it was its code meaning worked out:

Condor in fourth race Saturday to win. Sure thing.

Nevada.

Then she passed him the letter that had lain sealed in his pocket. He read:

Dear Friend: I ain't forgot. I said I'd make good.

There's a big commission here for a horse Saturday. I inclose code, and will send you wire when I know it's all right Friday, so's you can bet it away from the track. Don't get put off this—it's all in. Yours truly,

Jack Flannigan.

"Where'd you get this, girl?" Owen asked in a tired voice.

"It fell out of your pocket after you'd come to the races."

"Why didn't you find me and tell me?"

"Because I saw you at the station to meet Stella."

II.

Delilah

STEWART OWEN handed a telegram to the Man from the Desert, saying, "Andrews, I gave that wire at noon to the blonde you can see down there in the telegraph office, an' to-night I get it back. It didn't get through."

"Wasn't sent, Tootie?" Mrs. Owen gasped.

"No, Delilah; an' I was goin' to buy you a sparkler with that easy money."

"Of course it wouldn't get through, young man," Jack Andrews declared. "You wrote, 'Bet one thousand on Little Boy third race.'"

"An' Little Boy won," Owen wailed.

"That word 'bet' would stop it, Mr. Owen, 'cause it's agin the law to send bettin' information. If you'd wrote 'invest' or 'buy' it would've got through."

"The phones an' the telegraph are run the same way.

"I tried to get Rob McKee at Buffalo on the phone, but couldn't get through. The operator gave me the tip to get my party early in the mornin' next time, an' that's what I'm goin' to do to-morrow. What about it, uncle? I'll call Rob up at eight in the mornin' an' put two thousand on Drummer, eh?"

"I got rheumatiz," the old man declared tangentially.

"That's too bad, Mr. Andrews," Delilah soothed.

"'Tain't that that's too bad," Andrews objected.

"Tain't 'em leetle kinks that's botherin'. It's jus' that it's a sign of wuss—it's a pointer."

"Oh, cheer up, uncle," Owen advised. "You won't get laid up. You've just got that indigestion again."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout myself, young feller. What 'em kinks means is that it's goin' to rain. When the knuckles of my hands gets feelin's if each was a funny bone that'd been whacked, then I know there's a storm comin'."

"Oh, dear," Delilah exclaimed, "if it rains to-morrow I can't go over to the track to see your horse Drummer win."

"No, missis, if it rains there won't none of us see him win."

"I get you, Andrews. Drummer is a fast-track horse, eh?" Owen said.

"Well, he kinder isn't jus' a fast-track hawse, but he ain't web-footed—he ain't no duck. A good hawse'll run on any kind of a track, but some hawses'll run nigh as fast in the mud as they will on a lightnin' track. Some breeds is all like that. The Hastin's, they was regular mud boats; an' mos' colts got by Burnt Bread is just cousins to mud turtles."

The Man from the Desert contemplated his cigar as if recuperating from this excessive garrulity.

"Any mud turtles in to-morrow, uncle?" Owen queried.

Andrews rubbed his left knee, his old, old face twisting into a few more lines of tribulation.

"Yes, sir-ree, Mr. Owen, that's what! Slipper Dance is the gol-dangedest mud-runnin' fool I ever see. Ordinar'ly he ain't nothin' but a high-class sellin' plater—nothin' else. The Dakota Stock Farm people bred

him. He's by Burnt Bread, an' they sold him to Barney Lee for three thousand; sold him ——"

Andrews suddenly draped his shaggy head over the balcony in which they sat and, pointing a lean finger down to the rotunda, said, "There's the man as bought him—Barney Lee."

Delilah, following the line of direction the lean finger indicated, saw a smart, dapper, dark-faced man talking to the blonde telegraph girl. As Barney Lee turned his face in answer to a tap on his shoulder she recognized him. Her thin-pencilled black eyebrows drew down from their graceful arch and her dark eyes took on the look that changed them to red amber. Barney Lee was the man she had caught several times with his eye cocked up at her from the lawn of the race course that afternoon. Once he had come up into a box next where she sat, evidently well known to its occupants, who were racing people. Delilah had known that his voice had been raised to reach her ears to impress her with his magnitude as a man of money in the horse game. She had no puritanical ideas about anything, but she was imperious, and more or less a big-game hunter. So far as men were concerned she was cold-blooded. The best going for Delilah was all that interested her. On the face of things physically, malleably, her husband outclassed most of the men she met, and with the lucky spoon in his mouth he had been able and willing to get her the things she loved. Her fingers bore glittering testimony to that.

Evidently the man who had sought her recognition had been under the impression she was alone, for Stewart, big boy with a new toy, had inconsequentially been in the box very little. He had been busy, spending his

time in the paddock waiting for information almost until the horses went out; then a frantic dash for the iron men, the betting machines.

The Man from the Desert, drooling along, roused Delilah from this retrospect of Barney Lee's importunity.

"Yes, sir," he was saying, "that cuss down there don't look much in 'em dood clothes, but he's sharper'n a pricker on a hawse's bridle. He's a department store in the racin' game. You can get mos' any kind of goods you want outer that feller—if you pay the price. He's behind two or three bookmakers; he's got a contrac' on a good jock, Billy Wells, an' an unwrote contrac' on a couple more. When he wants to make a boat race of it ——"

"A boat race, Mr. Andrews?" Delilah queried.

"Yes, ma'am. When it's rigged up in a hawse race for two or three of the jocks to shoo in one that the wise money's on, that's called a boat race; an' Barney Lee's as clever a skipper in a boat race as I know of."

"I get you, uncle," Owen said. "That little wasp down there might make it a boat race to-morrow for Slipper Dance?"

"No, he can't frame up my boy Kelly; an' if it's a fas' track, same's 'tis to-day, Slipper Dance couldn't run fas' enough to hide the play. The whole bunch'd get ruled off."

"Well, where does that Dago come in? Looks to me's if you'd cop with Drummer."

The patriarch held up his left hand and gently caressed the knuckles of it.

"An' this bunch of fives is same's if they was a bees' nest—rheumatiz."

"Then it's goin' to rain, uncle?"

"That's all I'm feared of—all. There ain't nothin' else. If she breaks to-night that course can turn into a canal quicker'n any I ever see. An' Slipper Dance'll come sailin' up that stretch same's he was a hyderplane. I've saw him win a race in the mud, an' when the boy'd yanked the saddle off him he looked like a plaster-cast hawse like you see on moniments. All you could see in his face was his big eye winkin' at the judge. He had his braided tail cocked up like a rooster. You wouldn't think he'd been in a race at all. The other hawses was standin' there, their legs propped out like posts an' their flanks a-heavin', all in."

"I guess you named him right, uncle—a mud-runnin' fool."

"Yes, sir; Slipper Dance is let into this handicap with a hundred an' four pounds on his back, 'cause, you see, the handicap was made three days ago for a bone-dry track. Drummer's got a hundred an' eight, which ain't too bad; an' Devastator, which is a great hawse, carries a steadier of a hundred an' thirty-one pounds."

"Gad, uncle, Devastator is one of the best horses in the country, eh?"

"He's all of that, son, an' some more. But he ain't arrived from Saratoga yet. He won't get here till the mornin' now, an' he'll be seasick when they take him out of the car. I ain't feared of him."

"You're just afraid of the mud, eh?"

"There's a leetle somethin' else that I wish I knowed the rights of. I've heerd that Slipper Dance stepped in a hole on the other track an' is lame. If that's so I could beat him out if there was a leetle rain that only made the track sloppy, not heavy holdin'. It's this way about muddy tracks an' mud-runnin' hawses: If it was to rain

to-night or in the mornin' the hawses in the first three races'd chew that track up till it was heavy, an' these slow dogs that run on their strength would wallow through it. It would be agin Drummer, 'cause he's a long-stridin' hawse, an' he don't seem to find his speed on a holdin' track; but if it was to rain a little in the afternoon, an' the water lay on top, hadn't time to make the goin' soft underneath, Drummer'd run purty well."

"What is it you want to find out? Perhaps I could ——"

"No, you can't. Nobody can get Mr. Barney Lee to blab. He'll only tell 'em lies. I got as smart a boy workin' on the outside as lives on oats. He's hung around Lee's stable, an' he ain't found out nothin'—nothin' but lies. All the rail-birds has got it that the hawse ain't workin' none too good; an' Lee's trainer, Jack Burt, says he's off his feed. If he's like that, an' the track was only half decent, I could beat him."

"Perhaps he is off, uncle."

"When Barney Lee's gang says anythin' 'bout a hawse of their own you can jus' figger that ain't the facts an' start guessin' what is. Besides, Barney paid eighty dollars—what they call acceptance money—to-day, givin' his hawse a chancet to start. See? If the hawse was wrong he'd 've declared him out of the handicap an' saved 'em eighty bucks. An' I've heerd that Slipper Dance can run on a fast track, but I don't believe that."

The old man relapsed into the task of caressing his sore knuckles wth an alternate rub of his knee; and a curious twisted train of thought took possession of Delilah's active mind. How many times in the past had she smiled out of a man tips on mine stocks? She could see below the man who had placed himself so

studiously in her line of vision at the track in the congested mass of humanity that fairly packed the alleyways of the hotel, and watching his face she knew that it carried no suggestion of strength and depth. The face held a vulpine cunning, that was all. He would be potter's clay in the hands of an attractive, clever woman.

Stewart now declared, "If the track's muddy to-morrow, real muddy, we could win a big bet on Slipper Dance if we knew he was good—eh, uncle?"

"Yes, if you knowed he was good; an' if he wasn't good you'd blow your money, 'cause Devastator'd win—that's in the mud."

"Well, if it doesn't rain to-night, an' the sky is set for fair in the mornin', I'll phone Rob McKee at his house in Buffalo early an' back Drummer for two thousand," Owen declared decisively.

"I'll allow it would cut your odds if you was bettin' two thousand on Drummer at the track. You'd be playin' agin your own money, but it'd be safer," Andrews objected—"safer to see how my hawse was."

"But if the track gets heavy you won't start him; then my bet would be off."

"Yes, mos' like I'd put the pen through his name if the track was real heavy; but he'd have a chancet, 'cause he's game, if it wasn't too bad. Jus' a bit sticky on top wouldn't take away all his chances agin Slipper Dance. How'd you like to come over to the track in the mornin' to see Drummer, Mr. Owen, an' bring the missis? There ain't no nicer outin' for a man than a bright chirpy mornin', the air full of brace an' the sun sayin' 'Hello, boys,' an' 'em thoroughbreds full of it, jus' lovin' it; the boys havin' their arms tugged out by the hawses tryin' to make a race of it when they're only wanted to

do a nice gallop. There never was anythin' as nice in a theatre or a picnic."

"Lovely!" Delilah exclaimed. "Don't you remember in the West, Stewart, when we used to take our brons in the early morning and gallop out to the mine and back?"

"I might do that little thing, uncle," Owen said with a moderated compliance. "What time d'you get up?"

"Six o'clock, son."

Owen chuckled.

"Why bother going to bed? Just stick around till six. But I'll see. I'll put in a call to have a rooster crow, an' if the spirit moves I'll be with you."

"I'll go, Mr. Andrews," Delilah declared emphatically. "I know Stewart will back out. I love horses, and I'd like to see them when everybody wasn't talking about betting and winning money over them. When Mr. Owen makes a big win over a mine I'm going to take my share and buy a lovely thoroughbred and give him to you to train, Mr. Andrews."

The saturnine patriarch almost smiled; his face lost some of its austerity.

"Well, Mrs. Owen, anybody that loves the greatest creature on earth, a thoroughbred hawse, is purty human, purty human. I guess I come nigh likin' hawses better'n anythin'. A man's got to if he's much with 'em. If I was a rich man like Belmont I'd race hawses jus' for the love of seein' 'em gallop, jus' as he does. I wouldn't want to bet a cent, 'cause the two feelin's is dif'rent."

The old gentleman rose from his chair, his limbs performing their duty somewhat grudgingly.

"I'll say good-night, Mrs. Owen. I ain't feelin' none too chipper."

When the patriarch had gone Stewart laughed.

"It's funny to hear the old gent grouse about the crooked owners. He'd like 'em all to be honest. He figures he's got a copyright on all the horse tricks."

"But you string with him, Tootie. He doesn't throw you down."

"He's too clever. Besides, there's a curious streak in the old man. He'll play on the level with his pals if they don't try to cold-deck him." Owen pulled out his watch "Great snakes! I've got to beat it!"

"Stella, or poker?"

Owen looked hurt.

"Cut it out, Lilah! I'm goin' to meet John P. Withers at his house at 9.30. He's roundin' up a bunch of money-bag holders here that's goin' to take a half million block of stock in the Red Ledge Mine. I get 25 per cent. for placin' it. John P. is a big broker."

"Tootie, you're all for Stewart Owen. I've got to sit here alone or go to bed."

"Go in to the supper dance, girl. Have a swell little supper an' watch the shimmy. I'll be back by bed-time."

Delilah, peering down over the rail, saw Stewart pass with his swinging saunter, his muscularity imperceptibly clearing a path in the forest of lesser humanity below. As if ebbing back into the wake of Owen's passage, Barney Lee cut Delilah's line of vision, and her previous opinion as to his ductibility under subtle feminine influence returned to her. It would be joyous recreation to utilize his self-complacency.

There was a curious metamorphosis taking place in Delilah's mind. At the race track she had felt like implanting a hand on the cheek of the dapper stranger;

now she had a desire to pit her feminine mind against his man's cunning.

Andrews had admitted sorrowfully the impossibility of finding out just what Slipper Dance was like.

Delilah's mind was diverted from subtle cogitation by the advent of a Mrs. Wicks, who swept down upon her with bustling eagerness.

"Thank goodness, Mrs. Owen, I've found someone nice to talk to. I'm blue with keeping my own company. Mr. Wicks, as usual, is down somewhere in that mob talking horses."

"And my husband has gone out to talk mines," Delilah added, making room on the lounge for her stout visitor.

Strains of negro jazz were floating up to the balcony from the supper dance, and Delilah suggested that they move down closer to the music.

"I'll be glad to go, Mrs. Owen. The darky music just floats me back home. I was born down in Kentucky. I guess that is why I'm wrapped up in horses. Everybody there is, and I don't see that it has done them any harm. I guess Kentucky's the cleanest state in the Union. It's kind of as if it'd been placed out in the open, and not full of slums and big money men robbin' the public."

They had hardly taken a table in the supper room before Delilah saw Barney Lee enter and seat himself at a small table near them. She had seen this under lowered eyelids, a faint smile twitching her red lips, for she surmised that the little man had seen them pass through the foyer and had followed.

Lee had chosen his seat diplomatically, facing Delilah's companion. At the first opportunity he nodded

and smiled. The unsuspicious Mrs. Wicks acknowledged this genially, and Barney, seizing the opportunity, came over to congratulate her upon Viper's great race.

Nothing could have ingratiated him more completely. Mrs. Wicks introduced him to Delilah, and as he loitered she said: "We are two grass widows, Mr. Lee. My husband is talking horses, of course, and Mr. Owen has gone out to plot mines. Why not sit here and brighten us up? I've got a blue streak on. I guess women talk too much about their own troubles if there ain't men present to chaff them."

It did seem as if the gods of chance had dealt Barney Lee four aces. He sat down feeling that he had beaten the barrier in his race for an acquaintance with the beautiful woman he had taken a fancy to. Paradoxically Delilah was possessed of an impression that Fate had delivered Lee into her hands, using Mrs. Wicks as the medium. If the persistent one did not impart to her the knowledge Andrews had said could not be obtained, Delilah would feel that she was losing her magnetism.

When they had gleaned from the menu some trifles that appealed, Mrs. Wicks said: "Mr. Lee has a horse running to-morrow, Delilah—oh, that was a slip, Mrs. Owen. I heard your husband call you that—it seems so just to suit you; it's so unusual; it's like a beautiful name for a handsome race horse."

"Yes, Mrs. Wicks, call me Delilah. I like it."

"Will Slipper Dance win the stake to-morrow, Mr. Lee? Do you like him?" Mrs. Wicks asked.

"He's a mud runner, and the track is lightnin' fast," Lee answered. "He won't have a chance. I may not start him unless it rains, because he's lame, and a harder track would do him a lot of harm."

"My husband thinks Drummer has a good chance," Mrs. Wicks said; then added, "but he hasn't much faith in Drummer's owner."

"Well, Mrs. Wicks, your husband is a pretty shrewd judge of horses and men," Lee said oilily. "On a fast track Drummer should run a good race."

The pale blue eyes of Mrs. Wicks suddenly popped forward in their fatty holdings. They were fixed on the door as if she had seen a ghost.

"There's Mr. Wicks!" she exclaimed, apprehension in her voice. "He's looking for me—I've got the key of the room. I forgot to tell him I was coming in here." She flourished to her feet, the chair screeching back on the tiled floor as she pushed upward. "Excuse me," she apologized. "I'll be back—unless there's something important."

"The poor old lady won't come back," Lee commented with a smile. "She's just a valet to that old pirate."

"I'm sorry," Delilah declared.

"I'm not. I like Mrs. Wicks. But—well, I'm much obliged to old Wicks. First time I ever liked him."

Delilah toyed with an ice, apparently oblivious of everything but its quality.

"I saw you at the races to-day, Mrs. Owen," Lee advanced.

"Did you?"

"Did I? I'll tell the world I did!"

"Don't! The world makes a bad confident."

Barney laughed.

"I thought so. I knew you could say things like that."

Delilah allowed her wonderful eyes to express just nothing as she looked at Lee.

"Were you betting to-day?" he asked to recover his equilibrium from the disconcerting eyes.

"My husband put ten dollars on some horse——"

"And it stayed put?" Barney laughed.

"Yes, my husband is a mining man and doesn't know anything about horses."

Delilah had stated this more or less fact with swift casuistry. Lee's beady eyes, his crispness of speech, indicated that he was furtive, suspicious. If she were to learn from him anything about Slipper Dance he must not entertain the idea that this knowledge would be conveyed to a heavy better.

"Are you going to the track to-morrow, Mrs. Owen?" Lee asked.

"I may if it's fine, though I'm afraid my husband will be busy in the city."

"Come over—if it rains come sure. I've got a car, and you can listen to the patter of the rain on the shingles—your husband, too, if he'll come." He leaned partly across the table and, lowering his voice, said: "If it rains I'll make you win enough on Slippery Dance to buy the best diamond in Detroit."

"I hope it rains," and Delilah smiled sympathetically.

"You heard what I told Mrs. Wicks about Slipper Dance being lame?" he asked.

Delilah nodded.

"Well, she shouldn't have asked that question, and she tells old Wicks everything. He's got bettors behind him all over the country, and he'd wire it away. Then the odds against my horse would be cut to nothing."

"I see. Racing is an intricate business. It takes

a smart man to succeed," and Delilah's eyes clothed her words with admiration.

"You bet it does!" Barney declared. "The sharks think Slipper Dance is lame and can't win, no matter what the track is like. I don't help them forget that, either. I don't tell them any lies. Slipper Dance has got a crack in his frog, and he races in a bar plate that protects that. All the trainer's got to do is to take that off and put an ordinary plate on when he's working him and the horse limps comin' off the track."

"Awfully clever, Mr. Lee."

Barney accepted this compliment magnanimously and added, "Slipper Dance won't limp none to-morrow if I tell you to win the big diamond over him."

Looking up suddenly, Lee caught the black eyes of Delilah off guard. Their languor had given place to a look that startled him. He was a clever little animal. His brains usually worked with the quick celerity of a stop watch, and he realized that he had been drawn out of himself by the fascinating Delilah. The desire for her admiration had dulled his racing acumen. But it was too late to retract anything. Delilah was too clever for him to attempt to invalidate what he had said.

"I've told you something, Mrs. Owen, that if you was to repeat might cause me a big loss. I've trusted you with a stable secret. You'll play just as square with me, won't you?" Barney asked.

"I appreciate your confidence—I won't mention it," Delilah promised readily.

"Your husband?"

"I couldn't tell him without—well, without telling him too much, could I?"

Barney held out his small, well-shaped hand.

"We'll just shake on that."

Delilah let the tips of her long, tapering fingers rest on his palm for an instant. The cold, unresponsive touch somehow was not too reassuring. Their hands clasped, eyes focused, they were startled by a voice at Delilah's elbow saying, "Well, some little party!"

Delilah smothered a startled exclamation; and Lee, raising his eyes, saw a powerful-looking man, something in his face that suggested trouble.

"Oh, Stewart, you gave me a start!" Delilah gasped; then, "This is my husband, Mr. Lee."

As Barney rose to his feet Owen drawled, a supercilious curve to his lip, "If you're quite ready we'll leave Mr. Lee to finish his supper."

The little man's black, beady eyes blazed. There was something so contemptuous in Owen's attitude; it was like a mastiff thrusting a terrier out of his way. It was not alone the sneering affront of Owen's words; he had discovered, so he fancied, that he had been duped. He recognized Delilah's husband as the man he had seen with Jack Andrews, the owner of Drummer. There was no mistaking that athletic figure, that hat, that independent swing. Owen had been pointed out to him as the man who was backing Jack Andrews; and he, smart, secretive Barney Lee, had confided in this man's clever wife; had fallen a victim to her hypnotic eyes; had told her a stable secret. He was suffused with suppressed passion as Delilah, bowing to him, passed out beside Owen.

"I'll make the big boob pay for this," he snarled vindictively. "Delilah! She's well named, and I'm in the same class as Samson."

Up in their room Delilah explained that Mrs. Wicks

had introduced Barney and then had been called away by her husband.

"If you were out gunnin' for a man, girl, why did you bring down a guttersnipe like that?" was Owen's comment.

Of course Owen had a heavy debit on the marital slate, and Delilah mercilessly proceeded to balance accounts, disdaining any defense except her brief statement as to the chance meeting. Even the stable information she pocketed, feeling that Owen's manner did not entitle him to anything. They wrangled themselves asleep.

Almost as if it were a jangling retort the metal cup on the phone buzzed in a jingling clamor. It was the six o'clock call, Delilah gleaned, as she unhooked the receiver. She had slept all night.

She shook Owen, saying, "Are you coming to the course? It's time to get up."

"Im not so crazy," he retorted drowsily.

"I'm going," Delilah declared.

Before Delilah had finished dressing Andrews called up from below to ask if they were coming, adding that it was a glorious morning.

"Coming—please wait," Delilah answered, and soon she was ready, and had joined Andrews at his waiting car. Luckily there was no delay at the ferry, and in forty minutes they were on the course.

The air had been chilly as they crossed the river, but as they stepped from the car at the stable, Number A-5, where Andrews' horses were, the morning sun had softened the nipping tang, and Delilah drew a deep breath of tonicked satisfaction. It was, as Andrews had said, glorious, something worth while; it carried a

hint of the joy of living, of being alive. Graceful striding creatures, thoroughbreds, saddled, were being ridden or led out to the course for their morning gallop; others were coming in, looking as joyous as schoolboys out for a romp. Andrews spoke to his trainer:

"This is Mrs. Owen. I've brought her over to see Drummer work out. We'll go over and watch him from the stand."

A work-out suggested to Delilah something of excitement; but sitting beside the patriarch, who held his glasses on the big chestnut, she saw Drummer loaf lazily around the course like a good-natured hack. But when he turned into the stretch he broke into a dazzling sprint and came tearing up the track, his mouth wide open, as though he laughed at the joke. Even to Delilah, knowing not overmuch of horses, the way that symmetrical chestnut body, with its blood lines, seemed to settle down, spread out into muscularity, with hoofs beating at the course when the boy on his back gave him the rein, was a joy that thrilled her. Speed there had a soul, a vital force—something of the beauty of creation. It was different from the silent, almost vicious speed of a racing car—the dead meaninglessness of rapid machinery.

The sombre man at her side was exulting—muttering with pride.

"The ol' hawse jus' loves that. See him comin', missis! He's got a heart as big as a punkin', an' he jus' loves to run—spread 'em great quarters when the goin's good. An' that's what I wanted to know—if the track jus' suited him, an' it does. The ol' hawse's got brains. He'll always tell Cooper in the mornin' jus' what to expect, an' he ain't never throwed him down—he ain't

never quit in a race. See him comin' back now? He's jus' tickled to death. He'll jus' go into his box, an' when the boy has rubbed him down he'll clean up his oats same's a tramp puts away an apple pie."

Delilah accompanied Andrews back to the stable. As they stood in front of Drummer's stall she saw a bay head with a white blotch in the forehead hanging over the half door in a stall across the way. The head looked strangely familiar.

"Isn't that Viper?" she asked, pointing.

"That's Viper," the patriarch answered, turning to view the white-blotched forehead. "An' that black hawse you see in the next stall is Barney Lee's Slipper Dance, the hawse I told you 'bout las' night."

"I'd love to see Viper," Delilah said.

"Come on then," and Andrews took her across the open space between the stables, saying to a stableman sitting on an upturned pail, "This lady's a friend of Mrs. Wicks, an' she wants to look at your hawse." Lowering his voice he added to Delilah, "I'll mosey 'cross to my own stable. I don't want no truck with Wicks or his hawses."

Viper pricked his ears and stretched out his pink flesh-colored muzzle toward Delilah, inviting a caress.

The stableman, who had risen from his pail, said: "Don't be afeard, ma'am. Viper's powerful fond of ladies. The boys've got to be kinder careful of him, 'cause he's nervous with 'em; but a lady could sleep between his feet an' he wouldn't hurt her."

Viper was sniffing at Delilah's coat pockets as she drew closer, nibbling at them with his soft, flexible lips.

"He thinks p'r'aps you've got some sugar for him—he's some beggar," and, grinning, the man handed

Delilah a paper bag of sugar cubes, saying, "Go inside, lady, an' hold the sugar behind your back. He'll kiss you on the cheek till he gets it. Don't be afeard of him."

The man swung the half door, Delilah passed inside, and Viper, with ears pricked, a friendly longing in his big brown eyes, put his muzzle up to her cheek, saying plainly, "Please, please."

She heard the stableman say: "One of our horses is comin' in. I've got to go an' get him into his stall; but you stay right there an' pet old Viper—he loves it."

With her back to the wall, tempting the thoroughbred with the sugar behind her back, Delilah was conscious of a soft negro voice in the next stall drooling to Slipper Dance to the accompaniment of a curry brush.

"Ol' Slippah," the soft voice said, "you goin' leave me heah. You ain't goin' get me dat railway ticket to get me down home to ol' Kaintuck. Dere's some little yellor gals dere waitin' foh me. Ain't de good Lawd goin' send no sof' track foh youah ol' sof' foot so's Charlie can win 'nough to go home? 'Tain't youah fault day you got dat sore heel, ol' Slippah."

Suddenly Delilah started and stood rigid. A lump of sugar dropped from her fingers, and Viper buried his nose in the straw hunting for it.

The sharp snarling voice of Barney Lee cut into the darky's monologue, saying: 'Here, you clear out! We want to look Slipper Dance over. Git!'

There was silence save for a rustle of moving feet in the straw. Then she heard Lee speaking again:

"It's this way, Burt: I'm goin' to start this horse to-day if he breaks down."

"On a fast track? Goin' to uncover him to-day?" the thick voice of the trainer queried.

"No, I don't want him to win. What should win it if Slipper's not wanted?"

"Devastator is the class, but I guess his trip up has sent him back. Drummer looks good to me."

"That's why I'm starting the black. Devastator's got to win. D'you understand?"

"What's the play, Mr. Lee?"

"I've been stung! There's a big stiff named Owen—he's backing Andrews. I didn't know it was his dame I stacked up against last night, and she hooked me for fair. I guess that fathead framed it to find out about Slipper Dance for Jack Andrews."

"A skirt, eh?" and Delilah could hear Burt chuckle.

"I fell for it like a boob, because she's a swell looker and as clever as they make 'em. I don't know what came over me. I gave it away that Slipper Dance was good."

"What good is that goin' to do them?" Burt queried.

"It ain't—do you understand? What I'm sore at is that they framed me. I guess they was afraid Slipper could run on a fast track an' we was coverin' up, 'cause this four-flushing mining man, Owen, phoned Rob McKee at Buffalo this mornin' early two thousand on Drummer. That's my book, see? Rob called me up here at the track, askin' if he'd hold it or lay off. I told him to hold it. That's two thousand won if Drummer's beat. D'you get it?"

"Yes, I got you now."

"You've only half got me. This stiff, Owen, insulted me last night, and it was all part of the bluff."

"I see; you want to get even."

"I want to bet that two thousand that's found money on Devastator. You give Jockey Wells his instructions

how to ride Slipper Dance to kill off Drummer. He won't have to do much, because if Drummer gets shut off a couple of times Devastator'll win. I owe Jack Andrews something too. He crooked me once."

Delilah had heard enough. She slipped from the stall, fearing that she might be discovered, walked rapidly past the long row of stalls beneath the veranda, crossed over and retraced her steps back to Andrews' stable. Then a thought flashed into her mind that Lee would see her, for she was in full view of Slipper Dance's stall. She did not want to meet the little crook in her present anger, so she turned again and passed around the end of the long line of stables, and sauntering over to the gate that led out of the paddock, waited there, bathing in the warm sunshine.

Turning her head to look back she saw Lee coming toward the entrance. He had recognized her, for now he lifted his hat—perhaps he had seen her going and followed. Knowing what she did Delilah was astonished at the man's audacity. He was as gracious as he had been before the advent of Owen the previous evening. This really clever simulation reacted on Delilah, and she, too, became an artist of deceit.

"It was too bad, Mrs. Owen," Lee began, "for your husband to misunderstand the situation. Of course, if a man is jealous of a pretty wife, that's just about what he'll do—flare up without waiting to discover if he's right or wrong. I suppose I can hardly blame him, though at the time I was paralyzed."

As Lee let flow the oleaginous expressions of magnanimity Delilah was puzzled. Knowing his actual feelings, she wondered what he was leading up to—something of course.

"I explained the whole matter to Mr. Owen," Delilah said quietly.

"That ought to square it then," Lee declared. "I'm glad you did. I took a great fancy to you, and was blaming myself for getting you in wrong, I want to offset that by doing you a good turn."

"Now it's coming," Delilah murmured to herself.

Lee mistook the smile of derision that curved her red lips for one of yielding friendship.

"I told you last night," he resumed, "that Slipper Dance could win in the mud because he was good; but, though I was unusually communicative, I didn't tell you all. He will win to-day on this fast track, and you must have a good bet on him."

Although schooling herself to control Delilah was startled. Not satisfied to make Owen lose two thousand over Drummer by interference, he was now trying to cause her a heavy loss on a horse that was to be pulled—Slipper Dance.

Lee misunderstood the hesitancy that his plot had given rise to, and added; "Slipper Dance can run just as well on a dry track as he can in the mud, with that protecting plate on. Because I generally run him in the mud to favor his sore heel the public has an impression that he's nothing but a mudder. I'm going to show them to-day. I've sent away a big commission on him, and on a dry track he'll be ten to one. Don't repeat what I've told you—just make a big win and say nothing."

"I won't tell a soul to bet on Slipper Dance," Delilah answered cryptically. "I must go back to my friends now, Mr. Lee. I'll tell you to-night how much I win over Slipper Dance."

There was a sardonic smile on Barney's thin lips

as he said, "Yes, do that little thing. It'll give me great pleasure to know just how you come out on it."

When Delilah returned to the stable Andrews said: "Was lookin' for you, Mrs. Owen; but I guess you're so fond of hawses that you've been enjoyin' yourself. They're better to look at'n most people you see on the streets, anyway. If you're ready we'll be goin' back."

"I want to tell you something, Mr. Andrews," Delilah said, moving slowly away toward the grassed plot beyond the stables. The patriarch kept pace with her and when they were quite by themselves she related what had occurred. Andrews stroked his gray beard, offering no other sign of astonished anger.

"Just what I'd expec' of that shrimp," he declared—"Jus' what he'd do. An' he's so dang cunning he'd swear the boy's life away—his ridin' life if he was ketched."

"You'll report it to the race people and stop it, won't you, Mr. Andrews?"

Again the patriarch had a conference with his beard, and extracted from its long, straggling growth a different method.

"I guess I got a better plan, Mrs. Owen. That way'd get Jockey Wells in wrong with the stewards. He'd be set down, 'cause they'd figger that Barney'd know he'd do it—had done it afore. Barney wouldn't get ketched in his own trap; he'd bet on my hawse 'stead of Devastator. Besides, you'd get all tangled up in it, too, Mrs. Owen, an' 'tain't no place for a lady up there tellin' the stewards all 'bout crooked hawse racin'."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Andrews! I hadn't thought of that."

"Yes'm. Jockey Wells is over at the course now—

I jus' seen him; an' Barney Lee's gone out. You'd bes' take a leetle walk over with me, an' I guess we can fix it; I guess we can, an' no harm done to nobody but the snake that tried to frame this."

At the course Andrews said: "You jus' go an' sit up in the stand, kinder back a leetle. I'll bring the boy up an' we'll educate him between us; we'll explain to him the wickedness of pullin' hawses."

In a few minutes the patriarch came up into the stand where Delilah sat, with him Jockey Wells.

Wells was a curious type, a chubby little fellow with an immature, juvenile expression. A little pug nose made his face simous; the blue eyes were the eyes of a baby; but when they fell upon Delilah's beautiful face the baby eyes tensed from the washed-out blueness to appreciative violet.

"This lady is Mrs. Owen, Wells," Andrews said. "Her husband is a mighty fine man, an' puts down a good big bet sometimes on a hawse."

The baby shifted uneasily from one foot to the other; he turned his head and looked at the stairway; he sensed a desire for a tip on some horse.

"I don't know anythin' to-day, Mr. Andrews——"

"But we know somethin', Wells, an' we're goin' to put you wise—we don't want no tip," the patriarch declared.

Wells looked relieved.

"This lady was in Viper's stall this mornin'," Andrews continued, "an' she overheard Barney Lee an' trainer Burt talkin', an' this is what they was talkin' 'bout." Then Andrews related all that had occurred, the little man sitting with troubled face, listening in silence.

When Andrews had come to the end of the story Wells exclaimed: "I'm sick of that sort of thing! Mr. Godson, who is a good man to ride for—for a boy that wants to win—offered Barney Lee fifteen thousand dollars for his contrac' on me, an' I wanted to go to Godson. I'd h've give five thousand dollars myself to get clear. But Lee clung to the papers an' wouldn't turn the contrac' over to Godson. You know Barney Lee, Mr. Andrews, jus's well's I do, so I ain't givin' nothin' away when I say I'm sick of it."

"I knowed you was, Billy—anybody'd get sick of that skunk. An' I ain't goin' to report this to the stewards, 'cause that'd look mighty bad for you—mighty bad, special if you had a bit of bad racin' luck an' put up a loose ride on Slipper Dance. I guess you'd get the gate. You got a good many years of ridin' ahead of you at a salary bigger'n a bank manager's. You can ride at a hundred pounds, an' you ain't growed none—you ain't no bigger'n you was when you rode for me three years ago—so you've got a good many years ahead of you in the saddle. If you was to put up a bad ride on Slipper Dance to-day, an' this come out, you'd chuck away more'n a hundred thousan' dollars, 'cause you can earn that in five years."

"I won't put up a bad ride," the little fellow declared "If the trainer says anythin' to me about jobbin' Drummer I'll speak to the paddock judge."

"Don't do that, Billy! Jus' don't say nothin', but ride straight. Drummer's got plenty of foot, an' you'd have to ride Slipper Dance under the whip to cut him off. I'll be holdin' the glasses on you—p'r'aps I'll be in the infield. The patrol judge'll be watchin' for rough work, an' the stewards in the stand an' Judge

Frank'll be watchin', so if you done any rough ridin' this lad'd tell 'em what she'd heerd, an' you know what'd happen. Don't say nothin' to Barney Lee or the trainer. Jus' ride Slipper Dance's if he was all alone in that race. I ain't goin' to say nothin' 'bout this. I'm jus' goin' to hold it over Barney Lee, an' some day I'll put a crimp in him."

"I'll do that, Mr. Andrews; I'll ride Slipper's if I'd got orders to win if I could. But I'll tell you somethin', sir—I might beat your horse to-day."

"On a fast track?"

"Yes, sir. Barney Lee told this lady the truth when he said Slipper Dance could run on a fast track."

"How could it be the truth, Mr. Wells, when he was lyin' to me to get me to bet on the horse?" Delilah asked.

"Barney Lee is a clever crook—that's what he is. He'd figger that p'r'aps you'd heard that, because some people think that it's true, an' you'd believe him when he said he was goin' to win to-day. He didn't know you heard him say he was goin' to have the horse pulled."

Wells turned to Andrews.

"I worked Slipper Dance at Saratoga in the summer a mile an' an eighth—that's the distance to-day—in 1:53, an' he done it with his mouth wide open; I never moved on him. Lee's been coverin' this up, waitin' to make a big killin' on the horse; an' if I ride him out to-day that killin' may come off an' the owner not on."

A troubled look came to the patriarch's eyes. He had had suspicions of this very thing.

Delilah exclaimed: "I'm going to bet on Slipper Dance then, Mr. Wells."

"I didn't mean that it was a good thing, Mrs. Owens" the boy answered. "'Tain't! I've just said he might win. He'll have that plate over his cracked frog. The trainer'll leave it on so's he'll gallop fast enough to interfere with Drummer, but if his tender foot started to heat up poundin' this hard track he might quit."

"I'll back Slipper Dance," Delilah insisted.

The boy held out his tiny hand to Delilah, saying: "You can take my word for it that I'll ride him to win; and, Mr. Andrews, Slipper Dance won't interfere none with Drummer if I can help it. You've give me a square deal on this, an' that's more'n Lee was givin' me. He was takin' a chance of gettin' me ruled off, an' I wasn't to have a say in the matter. He might've ruined my life, 'cause I ain't fit for no other work but just ridin' horses."

As Andrews and Delilah motored back to Detroit, the patriarch roused himself from a deep cogitation to say: "I jus' guess we've got Barney Lee lashed to the mast. There's jus' one more thing I'd like to put over on him to-day to learn him not to be so dang crooked. If I'd the money to spare I'd claim Slipper Dance outer that race. I ain't got a mud runner in my barn, an' they're mighty useful to pay the feed bill."

"What would he sell Slipper Dance for, Mr. Andrews?"

The old man expressed a clucking noise that was meant for a chuckle.

"Barney Lee ain't got no say in the matter. He entered his hawse at fifteen hundred to get a light weight on his back, thinkin' there might come a muddy track. The purse is two thousand, with about two hundred entry fees added; the second hawse gets four hundred,

and the third two hundred—that leaves sixteen hundred to the winner. Anybody that's got a hawse in that race can claim Slipper Dance by puttin' thirty-one hundred dollars in an envelope with a wrote claim, an' deposit it in a box in the secretary's office fifteen minutes before the race. After the race the hawse is his, if there ain't no other claims. He's got to keep that hawse for thirty days—the hawse can't run in nobody's else's name for thirty days—it's agin the rules."

"And if there are other claims, Mr. Andrews?"

"They draw for the hawse—fust envelope outer the box gets the hawse."

Delilah's eyes sparkled. The patriarch's words had set her blood tingling with a desire to deal Lee a crushing blow, and also own a race horse. The atmosphere of the morning, the beautiful thoroughbreds, the tense interest that the brave creatures excited, had crept into her blood.

"I've got ten thousand dollars of the money I won on Condor in a bank in Toronto," she said. "If I had it here I'd buy Slipper Dance and give him to you to train. Wouldn't that be lovely?"

"He'd win himself out, Mrs. Owen, 'bout the fust time he started, if he was well placed," the old man advised.

"I wish I had the money here," Delilah sighed. "I wonder if I could get it by wire in time."

Andrews pondered this matter in silence for a little. A good horse in his stable with somebody to pay a training fee wasn't so bad, not so bad at all. He would also get a part of the winnings—he'd see to that.

"If you're dead sot on gettin' Slipper Dance, Mrs. Owen," he said presently, "I guess it could be managed.

I got a credit balance with the Orworth track, 'cause I won over four thousand in purses at the meet. I could put my check in with the claim, an' it'd hold good; then if you got the hawse you could give me your check."

"Do that, please," Delilah cried eagerly. "Don't tell Stewart anything about it. It'll be like getting a horse for nothing, because I won the money on Condor. It won't be Stewart's money at all."

"I'll attend to it, Mrs. Owen," the patriarch declared. "If you change your mind let me know half an hour before the race."

"I won't change my mind," Delilah declared emphatically. "I'd just love to have a race horse."

"I guess a woman mos' always wants somethin' to look after. Some of 'em, if they ain't got babies, gets 'em dang blear-eyed, four-legged mops they call dogs. Some of 'em does wuss. They string with half a dozen dif'rent men—that's wuss still."

"One man is enough for me, Lord knows," Delilah laughed.

"He's kinder frisky, but I guess he's in good hands; an' he ain't got no meanness in him—jus' got a kinder healthy idee everybody's on the level. Lor', when he laughs one wants to give him a hawse or somethin'," the patriarch said.

"Perhaps I can make Stewart pay for Slipper Dance to-day," Delilah said with a smile. "I'll borrow five hundred from him, and perhaps win the horse with that five hundred."

"Don't let me put you off, Mrs. Owen," Andrews objected; "but I jus' wouldn't do that. That boy Wells has got great hands when it comes to handlin' a hawse. He can nurse a tired hawse home an' win. He's got good

judgment of pace, but that purty nigh lets his judgment out. His brain ain't growed no more'n his body has; he's jus' a baby. Slipper Dance can't beat Drummer at a mile 'n 'an eighth on a fast track—can't beat him nowhow. Drummer's got speed, an' I don't think Slipper Dance has. He's a mud-runnin' fool. An' Drummer can stay. He'll run that last furlong faster'n the fust mile."

"Well, Mr. Andrews, five hundred won't put a big hole in that twelve thousand I won over Condor, and I'll be backing my own horse, practically, for you'll have claimed him."

"I guess you was born in the West, wasn't you, Mrs. Owen?" the patriarch asked.

"Yes, Spokane."

"They breed 'em that way out there, men an' women," Andrews declared solemnly. "There's somethin' in the climate. I guess the Creator kinder put that spirit into the atmosphere so's the earth'd be developed."

The car had now swung in to the curb at the hotel, and Andrews, letting Delilah out, said: "I'll park this bus an' take you an' Mr. Owen over this afternoon. We'd bes' leave about one, 'cause there's a big jam at the ferry with people goin' to the races."

As they motored to the course Jack Andrews would sometimes take his hand from the wheel and shake his fingers. Time and again he scanned the sky off toward the west apprehensively. The sun was shining, but there was a heavy oppressiveness in the air, a murkiness; and in the west, peeping above the horizon, were clouds, their deep purple suggesting density.

"My knuckles is yelpin' rain," the old man growled once, "but I guess she'll hold off till to-night. If she

holds off till half past four she can cut loose then an' I won't worry none."

"Why 4:30, uncle?" Owen queried. "You got a date with the weather?"

"Kinder, so far's I'm concerned. I come purty near prayin' las' night for a fas' track for the Tribute Stake, an' that's run at four o'clock."

"I see. Cheer up, uncle! It isn't goin' to rain before night," Owen declared blithely.

Delilah was divided in her allegiance. She didn't wish Andrews any ill luck; she didn't want to see Stewart lose the two thousand he had bet on Drummer; but all her interests, the interests of Delilah, a paramount thing, were tied up in Slipper Dance; and rain, a muddy track, would be advantageous. She hoped it would rain.

Owen had secured three reserved seats just behind the row of open boxes.

"I'd have taken a box," he explained, "but it'll be broilin' out there in the sun. I'll stay pretty close, Lilah," he added, "'cause I'm goin' to confine my bettin' to the fourth race. I guess I'll put another thousand or two on Drummer. The old man's very sure he'll win."

As the horses were going out for the third race Andrews joined the Owens, saying, as he took his seat beside Delilah: "I've did the sowin'; now I'm jus' goin' to sit here an' watch for the harvest."

"Drummer, uncle?" Owen asked.

"Yes, Ol' Reliable's ready to do his part—he never was better. Cooper thinks he'll win, an' I've promised my boy Kelly four times a winnin' mount if he lands him fust past the post."

"How much, uncle?"

"A hundred."

"I'll buy a fifty-dollar ticket for the boy," Owen declared. "That'll let you out."

"Thank you, son. I can't afford to bet none myself to-day."

"You don't need to. You're in five hundred on my two thousand, an' if the sky don't slop over I'll bet another thousand or two."

The patriarch turned a troubled face upward, leaning forward to peer from under the stand roof.

"I guess she'll hold off, son, though she's purty dark behind the stand over in the west—purty dark—an' I see a few streaks of lightnin'."

"The race'll be over in half an hour," Owen contended.

"Purty near." Andrews turned to Delilah. "You still set on backin' Slipper Dance?"

Delilah unclasped her hand bag and held it open toward Andrews, displaying a sheaf of fifty-dollar bills, saying, "Borrowed money always brings good luck."

"Borrowed is right, girl. You'll lose it, but you've got to pay it back," Owen thrust in.

"Well"—the patriarch stopped to take two sweeps with a hand at his beard—"that skunk Lee was goin' to put Drummer out of the race, an' while I don't believe in doin' nothin' crooked, I'd 've returned that compliment if it shaped right. My jockey, Kelly, is an awful hones' boy. He'd do mos' anythin' for me, 'cause I treat him right. He knows Barney Lee done me dirt, not oncet but twicet, so I was feared he might pinch off Slipper Dance a-purpose—might give him a bit the wust of it. I had a leetle talk with him up in my room to-day after we went back, an' told him to ride an hones' race. I told him if anything happened so's he couldn't win not to do nothin' to Slipper Dance, 'cause you was bettin'

on him, Mrs. Owen. I told him there wasn't none of us puttin' a bean on Devastator; that we'd like if anythin' happened Drummer to see Slipper Dance win."

"That would've been good stuff if it had rained an' Slipper Dance had a chance," Owen remarked.

"It won't do no harm, anyway. Races is dang funny things. If owners could dope 'em out beforehand so's they'd turn out right everybody'd get rich—an' most of 'em is broke. Anyway, Kelly's an awful hones' boy, an' I told him Barney Lee is bettin' on Devastator; so I guess he won't give the big hawse Devastator none the best of it; that wouldn't be racin'," and Andrews drew his lean face into a mask of righteousness.

Delilah laid her slim fingers on the patriarch's arm.

"You think of everything, Mr. Andrews. That was very kind of you."

"Well, I was jus' tryin' to keep the money in the fam'ly. If Drummer gets beat Slipper Dance might win. It'll be kinder too bad for Kelly if it goes that way," he added mournfully. "His fifty-dollar ticket on Drummer won't be no good."

"I'll fix that," Delilah declared. "I'll buy him a fifty-dollar ticket on my horse."

"My horse!" Owen exclaimed. "I like that! You're gettin' pretty racy, girl."

Delilah gasped. She had nearly let the cat out of the bag. She hadn't told Stewart about the intended claiming of Slipper Dance.

Something of this subconsciously touched the patriarch's memory, and he said, "I put that claim in jus' as I come up."

"What claim, uncle?" Owen asked.

Now it was Andrews' turn. He had forgotten that

Stewart was not to know till afterward. He drew a big hand across his mouth and answered: "I guess I was talkin' in my sleep; I was jus' thinkin' of stable bus'ness; I got to claim 'prentice allowance for my boy to-morrow."

The third race had been run. It was a three-quarter spring for cheap selling platers, and nobody but the bettors was much interested.

Across the track, like a fireman's ladder being erected against a building, a board structure heaved up to the perpendicular, carrying the numbers of the starters and their jockeys' names. Three horses had been scratched, leaving seven runners. Andrews wrote the jockeys' names on his programme.

"There they are," he said. "Drummer's Number 1, next the rail; Brophy's ridin' Devastator, Number 2; an' Slipper Dance has got third position. My idee is they'll finish jus' like that—Drummer fust, Devastator second an' Slipper Dance third. It's a hunch."

"Do you know what I think, Mr. Andrews?" Delilah said.

"I guess you keep thinkin' all the time, Mrs. Owen."

"Some judge, old man! Some shrewd observer!" and Owen laughed.

"I think hunches are only fit for children," Delilah declared. "Absolute convictions are the only things to play in racing."

She took eleven fifty-dollar bills from her bag and handed them to Stewart, saying, "Bring me back eleven fifty-dollar tickets on Slipper Dance, Tootie; that includes one ticket for the jockey. But if you meet a cross-eyed darky don't turn back—keep going."

A grumble of thunder caused the patriarch to jump to his feet with unbelievable alacrity for such a sedate

individual and clatter down to a front box, where he stood craning his long scraggy neck in an effort to scan the sky over the grand stand. Stewart waited till the patriarch presently returned growling: "She's a-comin', but we'll get this race afore she breaks—that's all I ask."

"Me too," Stewart affirmed. "I want to cop about six thousand over Drummer." Then he swung down the steps and disappeared.

"I ain't goin' out to the paddock," Andrews said, seemingly addressing the infield, really holding a self-communion. "I'm goin' to sit right here an' not tempt Providence by gettin' from under cover. I'm kinder unlucky," he added, turning his solemn gray eyes on Delilah. "If I was to go fishin' I'd get soaked in a storm—p'raps I'd fall in the creek—an' I'd come home without a darn fish."

"Touch wood," Delilah laughed. "Put your thumb on the seat; that's the way to beat bad luck. If you keep groaning you're sure to get sick."

Presently Owen returned and handed Delilah a bunch of oblong pasteboards, saying laconically, "You're on. I wish you'd give me an I O U for that amount."

Delilah looked at the pasteboards. Some of them were yellow and some were pink. Then she scanned them closer.

"What's this, Tootie? Some of these are printed 'to show.' What does that mean?"

"I coppered your bet—I split it. Three hundred to win an' two-fifty to show."

"To show?"

"Yes, to run third—to be in the money. If Slipper Dance is one-two-three you lose nothin'—perhaps make somethin'. Nobody expects that horse to win this race."

"I do," Delilah said decisively.

Stewart laughed.

"The faith of a woman is beyond all count. You hang on to them tickets, an' when the race is run I'll go down an' get your money back on third place."

"I think Mr. Owen is right," the patriarch declared. "One of the greatest things in bettin' is to be able to play safe."

Delilah slipped the pasteboards into her hand bag, saying, "You must've met the cross-eyed darky, Tootie."

"By heck!" Andrews exclaimed.

This had been wrung from him by a sudden commotion on the lawn. The mass of humanity that had stood shoulder to shoulder was disrupted; the individual units were scurrying toward the stand; slanting tentacles of wet were beating down, and above there were the reverberations of heavy artillery. A push of wind swept through the stand, carrying hats before it. The infield that had been yellow in the sunlight was darkened to sombre green; the aisle between the boxes and the tiers of seats was packed with pushing, struggling humans who fought their way up to escape from the rain.

Delilah saw a little dark-faced man leap from a box and battle the thrusting mob, making his way toward a staircase. It was Barney Lee. The rain had electrified him to a new course of action. It would be a muddy track. If he could get down to the paddock and countermand his orders to Wells to pull Slipper Dance—tell him to win—and get back to the iron men in time to pour in thousands he would forgo his revenge. He could make a killing with no chance of loss.

In his excited eagerness he lost all sense of caution, all decency; he battled against the serried mass of

humans that worked their way upward. A full-powered, heavy-jowled man that Lee had elbowed in the stomach thrust grimy fingers in his collar and shook him like a rat; cursed him; wanted to know who he thought he was, where he thought he was going. Barney struggled hopelessly.

The rough one snarled, "You tinhorn! you piker! Why didn't you put your two dollars on before?" He thrust Barney from him, declaring, "I ought to throw you over the rail, you shrimp!"

"They're comin' out, by heck!" Andrews advised.

And Delilah, shifting her eyes from the still struggling, pushing Lee, saw, just beyond the paddock, the line of thoroughbreds with their silk-coated riders passing through the gate to the course. The jockeys were humped forward as if the pelting rain had beaten their shoulders down.

They were out; the gate had closed; they had passed from the dominion of the paddock judge and were in the hands of the starter; the turmoil of the elements was nothing; the law of the race was paramount.

"I guess the ways of the Lord is mysterious!" the patriarch groaned. "If it keeps up, if they don't get away soon, that track'll be a swale."

The procession of horses seemed like a funeral to Andrews. The slow-measured walk of the steeds was like the ticking of a grandfather's clock, each second registering a lessening chance.

Across the sky serpent tongues of flame darted; and—one, two three, in seconds—there was a deafening crash of thunder. The stand rocked on its steel pillars. And the file of horses plodded on.

As they passed the stand Andrews commented:

"See the big chestnut, Devastator? He's a tired hawse. It was a sin to start him, taken off the train this mornin'. He's the biggest-hearted hawse I ever knowed. 'Tain't often that anythin' that grows big is as plucky as a gamecock, but Devastator is. The poor ol' feller'll nigh break his stout heart to-day tryin', but his limbs is weary. He's half drunk from the rockin' of that train. The big weight he's packin', hundred an' thirty-one pounds, 'll tell on him in that slip'ry goin'. An' look at Slipper Dance! That black leetle cuss is as perky as if the stable boys was givin' him a wash-down. He jus' feels to home in this dang storm; the slop feels good to his sore heel. His braided tail's standin' right out, showin' he's mighty cocky. He's jus' built to run through a plowed field; short-coupled, strong quarters, deep narrer chest an' big wide nostrils that takes in lots of air. I've seen him run in the mud. He's got a short, choppy way of goin' that keeps him from flounderin' about in the grease."

"Drummer doesn't seem to mind it," Owen declared hopefully. "He's all business."

"Yes, he's hones'. It won't be heavy—jus' slop, an' Slipper Dance'll know he's been in a race if he beats Drummer."

At some signal from Judge Frank the jockeys did not turn in a parade, but continued on toward the barrier a furlong down the stretch. Past the platform on which stood the starter they went; and now the rain, like a veil, almost hid them from the stand. Already the course was white with floating water that the earth had not had time to absorb.

As the horses circled fifty yards from the barrier and faced the driving rain some of them, in rebellion at its

pitiless thrust, whirled and broke. Vainly the jockeys sought to bring their mounts to the starting gate.

Cupping his hands into a megaphone, the starter bellowed, "Go back! Go down the course! Keep your horses moving—keep moving!"

Then he turned his face to the black sky, waiting till the first tempest should subside. He knew that the horses were safer there, if they kept moving, than if they were back in the saddling paddock that was swaying in the storm like a tree. Besides, he had no orders to recall them; he had never seen it done.

"They can't race in that rain," Delilah offered.

"They got to!" Andrews declared. "They're in the hands of the starter—that means a race."

"I guess my money's on the blink, uncle. It'll be a heavy track," and Owen laughed.

"It won't be heavy—it's too sudden," Andrews objected. "But it'll help that black devil with the sore foot. You got a mighty good chance now, Mrs. Owen. Lordy, look at it! 'Tain't rainin'—it's just the bottom's fell outer the sky!"

The downpour was like the flood of a woman's tears—it had hushed the passion of the sky; the booming of thunder had ceased; the red crevices in the heavy black had disappeared; there was just the beat of rain that seemed to smother the earth.

The stand was a solid mass of humanity, a humanity hushed to silence by the overpowering magnitude of the storm. Scarcely any one spoke. They stood or sat shoulder to shoulder and waited.

And down the course seven horses wove in and out, guided up and down in that pitiless rain by their plucky jockeys, who knew only one law—the word of the starter.

Now that omnipotent official swept a big hand upward beckoning them to come on, for the tumult of the skies had lessened, the downpour had moderated. The drenching had taken the fire out of the thoroughbreds. They came up the course as if schooled cavalry horses—up, up to the barrier. A little shifting; a horse, his bridle grasped by the assistant starter, twisted out into his proper place; a bellowing word from the starter, and the silent ones in the stand were roused to vociferousness.

"They're off! They're off!" echoed.

"Drummer's on the job," Andrews droned as the golden chestnut, roused from his placidity, with marvelous quickness was first away. A neck back raced the gigantic Devastator. Outside of these two, lapped halfway, galloped, nose and nose, Slipper Dance and The Butler. Thus they thundered past the stand, the three other horses behind.

At the first turn Wells eased Slipper Dance back and cut down the incline to swing his horse in behind Drummer flat against the rail.

"See that!" Andrews said. "Billy Wells don't never throw nothin' away. Now he's got a nice berth an' they can't pinch him off. P'r'aps Kelly whispered to Billy when they was down the course to slip in behind Drummer, an' if Kelly knowed he was beat he'd let Slipper Dance through. Billy Wells is ridin' jus's if he knowed somethin'."

Down the back stretch they raced, and Andrews could see that Brophy on Devastator was trying to run around Drummer to steal from him that short cut, the rail position.

But he could see also that Kelly was still riding high

in the stirrups, holding the chestnut Drummer in his lap. He hadn't moved on his horse.

"Drummer's still in the lead, uncle, an' goin' easy," Owen commented. "Kelly hasn't made a move, an' Devastator's jockey is shakin' the big horse up."

"That don't mean too much, son," the patriarch droned. "Kelly don't never have to hustle Drummer. That hawse'd run his heart out for that boy, 'cause he ain't never laid the bud on the ol' hawse's ribs but oncet—that was in the Condor race. Oh, Lord, I wisht it was a fast track! There wouldn't be nothin' to it; Drummer'd beat Slipper Dance in a walk."

"Devastator's gainin'," Owen cried, for as they rounded the oval Devastator's long neck was in front.

But Andrews explained: "Em two boys, Kelly an' Wells, is puttin' it over Brophy. He shouldn't be makin' his run on the big hawse round that turn; he should've waited till he swung into the stretch; they're kiddin' him. Drummer makin' the runnin', Brophy thinks he's only got Drummer to beat."

Devastator was now half a length in front. Suddenly he dropped back, and Drummer, too, had checked his speed. The black head of Slipper Dance was pushing in between Drummer's quarter and the rail.

"Take that, Brophy!" Andrews snarled. "That serves him right," he added, still holding his glasses focused on the two chestnuts. "Brophy tired to pinch Drummer on the rail, an' Kelly bested him—he carried him wide."

Now they were swinging the last turn, and gallant Drummer's golden head was still in front. But between Drummer and the rail a wedge of space showed. Then it was blotted out by the black form of Slipper Dance.

He had slipped into the opening made by the two boys on Drummer and Devastator who were fighting for the lead.

"Drummer was carried wide," Owen said.

"I guess the mud's got him," Andrews moaned. "He's tirin'. Kelly can't keep him straight." He lowered his voice almost to a whisper. "I guess Kelly knows he's beat an' ain't goin' to give Devastator none the best of it."

Tensed humans were now sending up cries of "Devastator! Devastator! Come on! The favorite'll get this!" For the big honest horse was always a favorite.

But the black, Wells low crouched on his back, as motionless as a sleeping bird, was catching up—up, and new cries sounded:

"Slipper Dance! The black wins!"

Andrews, in a tired way, lowered his glasses for a second to say: "I guess it's all over, son. The further that black devil goes in the mud the faster he runs, an' a hundred an' four on his back ain't nothin'."

A roaring turmoil in the stand, the crashing of men to their feet, even up on the benches, caused Andrews to clap his glasses back to his eyes.

"It's still a race—still a race!" he droned. "Ol' Devastator's comin' again! Anythin' may win!"

The boy on Slipper Dance, low crouched along the black's neck, an eye cocked over his shoulder, saw the rush of the big chestnut. He sat down and rode, lifting Slipper Dance with knee and spur, with arm and shoulder. Foot by foot they fought it out, chestnut and black; and always the lean camel, Devastator, gaining by inches. The black head and the chestnut head rose and fell—

now the black seemingly in front, and then the yellow head in the lead. And no man could say as the judges' stand blotted them out which had won; no man could say—except the judge.

There was a hush. The clamor had died out as though the lava of Vesuvius had buried the stand.

Then a roar went up as Number 3 was dropped into the first niche.

Slipper Dance had won!

Delilah had been standing on her chair. Her finger nails had indented themselves in Stewart's arm. Intensity had stilled articulation. Now the lids of her wonderful eyes were moist. She shook hands with Andrews, with Owen, crying, half in forgetfulness, "And to think that that beautiful horse is mine!"

Owen stared.

"I guess the excitement's got you goin', Lilah. Don't you own the track too?"

Andrews, knowing that the time for secrecy was really up, explained:

"I put in a claim for Slipper Dance for Mrs. Owen, but we don't know jus' yet. If there's other claims we'll have to draw. I best get down there quick. If we get the hawse I'll ask the stewards to make Lee deliver him in the saddlin' paddock right away. He'll be so dang mad that if he gets him inter his stable he'll yank that bar plate off his hoof, an' I want that. It jus' suits him."

The patriarch thrust his strong angular figure through the excited people, and Owen, a quizzical, boyish stare in his eyes, said: "You're a corker, Lilah! An' you used to lecture me about racin'!"

"And I've won enough nearly to pay for the horse, Tootie."

"We've won enough," Stewart corrected. "You backed him with my five hundred. I guess I'm fifty-fifty in this."

Delilah opened her hand bag, shuffled the tickets and tendered Owen a bunch, saying, "There's your half."

Stewart gasped. They were all show tickets—on Slipper Dance for third place.

"It was your fault," Delilah declared. "I told you to bet to win. That will get your five hundred back."

"Well," Stewart said resignedly, "give me yours. I'll cash 'em for you."

"I'll cash them myself," Delilah retorted sweetly.

The gaunt figure of Andrews pushed into the aisle.

"You've got Slipper Dance, missis," he said. "Cooper's ready with a halter."

Then the patriarch vanished.

III.

Who Laughs Last

AS Delilah crossed the hotel rotunda she saw a well-known figure standing at the telegraph office. There was no mistaking that ensemble of dolorous gray: the big gray slouch hat, beneath it calm, uncommunicative farthing eyes; the large drab features almost engulfed in a wilderness of iron-gray scrub.

Delilah had a flitting thought anent the happy nomenclature that had labelled the patriarch the Man From the Desert. But this standing reproof against frivolity had an exhilarating effect upon Delilah; her eyes sparkled and, stepping forward eagerly, she held out a slim hand, a smile curving her lips away from beautiful, even white teeth.

"You've arrived, Mr. Andrews," she greeted. "And how is my horse?"

The patriarch turned his eyes from right to left warily, and answered at a tangent: "It's a mighty fine day, Mrs. Owen; a mighty fine day. Yes, ma'am, I'm purty well for a young feller; purty well. I kinder got a sore toe; if we could sit down in a quiet corner I'd ——"

"We'll go up to the lounge, the corridor." She beckoned a page. "Just keep an eye for Mr. Owen, will you, lad? He'll be here in a few minutes; tell him I'm up in the corridor."

"I jus' got in this mornin'," Andrews said, taking a big, comfortable chair, "an' all my hawses is in good shape—never was better. I've been down to the track all day seein' the babies took care of. There's jus' a leetle somethin', Mrs. Owen, if you'll excuse me; I wouldn't say nothin' much 'bout Slipper Dance."

The patriarch brought forth a pocketbook and, taking from it a blue slip of paper, handed it to Delilah, saying, "Here's your check for thirty-one hundred."

Delilah started and let the hand that had lifted to take the check drop back in her lap; the black eyes, which when she was roused were almost vicious, seemed to burn into the sombre, heavy-lined face of the Man From the Desert.

"What does this mean?" she asked. "You haven't cashed it?" A quick suspicion that Andrews meant to take advantage of his claim and keep the horse himself was rousing her to a fury.

"It means, Mrs. Owen," the patriarch answered slowly, "that I don't want to take no chancet of that hawse goin' back to Barney Lee. If he could prove that I claimed him for you, an' prove that you owned him afore the thirty days is up, that's what'd happen. An' my hawses might have to stand in the barn eatin' their heads off 'cause the stewards mightn't let me start a hawse. I heered a leetle somethin' at the bank over in Windsor, an' I jus' didn't cash your check in. Barney Lee had been there askin' one of the boys somethin'—a boy he give some tips to—he was askin' if I'd cashed anybody's check for a biggish amount. You take it back, Mrs. Owen, an' keep it; an' when the thirty days is up I'll sell you Slipper Dance for that same amount, all sealed, signed an' delivered aforesaid.

Then he can run in your name. I'll mos' likely start him here in my name, as his owner, an' nobody'll know nothin' 'bout what we're goin' to do. You keep it, Mrs. Owen, as I tell you"—as Delilah waved the check back to Andrews—"an' if the stewards asks me I can say I ain't had a dollar, an' paid for him myself."

Delilah held out her hand to the patriarch, reaction from the suspicion warming her impulsive nature. "Thank you, Mr. Andrews. You're a wonderfully thoughtful man."

"I guess if I hadn't kinder been a purty steady thinker in this game I'd be rubbin' down somebody else's hawse for a livin'; I couldn't keep away from them, anyway."

"Here's my husband," Delilah exclaimed as Stewart Owen stepped from the elevator and with his swinging stride came toward them, a hand outstretched and a smile gracing his greeting to the Man From the Desert.

"Just got in with the horses, eh, uncle?"

"This mornin'."

Owen swung his powerful frame into a chair, threw his hat to a lounge, and the smile was chased away by a tired look that crept into his eyes. "Well, uncle, minin's got racin' nailed to the mast for crookedness and a throw-down."

"Mr. Owen, I've sampled both of 'em, an' I'll present the peach stone to minin'. The racin' laws is handled by a bunch of high-class gentlemen; they've roughed me oncet or twicet, but I guess I was kinder careless; but minin' has got laws made a-purpose for shark lawyers to twist. There ain't nothin' to it but dollars. In hawse racin' there's the biggest sport on earth, an' there's

some blue-blooded gents playin' it—big men that love hawses as hawses."

Into Delilah's eyes had crept a look of pained uneasiness; it wasn't often that her boy husband did anything but laugh, or chirp a few cuss words.

"What's wrong, Tootie?" she queried, and something in the timbre of her voice caused the Man From the Desert to turn his head and study her curiously.

A grin struggled to Owen's lips.

"Nothin' much wrong—just that I'm dished, I guess."

Andrews coughed. "Nobody ain't dished, son, till they give up; no hawse ain't ever beat till he quits."

"What is it, Tootie?" Delilah asked with quiet insistence.

"Wish I could buy a drink, uncle. This is when a fellow needs a friend," Owen declared at a sweeping tangent.

"Well, now, son," the patriarch remonstrated, "what's the matter with me? How do I stack up in this friend handicap? Ain't I an entry?"

"Yes, Tootie; if you won't tell me, tell Mr. Andrews."

"He's got troubles of his own, Lilah."

"I ain't got no troubles. I ain't been here long enough to owe a feed bill yet."

"Tisn't the money," Owen announced with mystifying lucidity; "it's the devilish idea that when you help a man he throws you."

"As to ——" Delilah suggested.

With a long breath of reluctance Owen explained: "I grubstaked Jules Dubois to a thousand dollars. He came to me on his uppers; said down in Kebec he had beeg fam'lee, seventeen li'l' Napoleons, an' Marie, mother to the seventeen li'l' Napoleons, an', *mon Dieu!*

he know where is beeg gol' mine. And now Dubois and one Pete Hennessey have ze beeg gol' mine, an' yours truly, Stewart Owen, is on the outs."

Owen laughed.

"Lovely, Tootie! Go on; you're an actor!" Delilah put her slim fingers on his arm, giving it a brave pinch of encouragement.

"Did you have a wrote agreement with him, son?" the patriarch asked.

"Sure thing, uncle." Owen drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to the patriarch. "And my lawyer says it isn't worth a damn!"

"Your lawyer knows what he's talkin' 'bout," Andrews affirmed after its perusal. "Two ostriches could've drew up a better one if they was plannin' to stake a nest."

"I guess Dubois got what they call an *avocat* to ring that in on me, an' I must've signed his copy without readin' it. Dubois just agrees to stake three claims, an' give me a half interest."

"Then you've got to have your half interest, haven't you, Stewart?" Delilah asked.

"Sure! I've got a half interest in three claims up in Bucke Township that're worth minus whatever anybody'd pay for 'em. Havin' completed his agreement with me as per writin', Dubois hooks up with Pete Hennessey, an' stakes the Shinin' Tree over at Gowganda, an' the Shinin' Tree is some mine, believe me! They're sellin' it to a bunch of Johnny Bulls for one million round iron men. I've been fightin' 'em all day. Once I had that dang Frenchman by the throat, half across the table. I landed on Hennessey just once, an' he won't forget it in a hurry. Guess I'll be fined a

hundred in the police court to-morrow; Dubois says that'll be a sure thing."

"I guess you was tryin' purty hard to convince them they was wrong," Andrews commented dryly.

"I thought you looked tired when you came in, Stewart," Delilah remarked. "But I wouldn't get into any nasty squabble over it, boy; let them have the mine."

"I was in the minin' game for 'bout ten years," Andrews drawled; "an' if you let me train this Shinin' Tree hawse for you, Mr. Owen, I cal'c'late I could land half that purse."

"Go to it, uncle; I'll split it with you, because it's all to nothin'. My lawyer says I'm all to the mustard."

"I don't jus' know the minin' laws here in Canada," Andrews declared thoughtfully, "but I guess purty nigh all the laws an' constitutions we got in God's country was touted on to us from England. Anyways, minin' laws is like Dan O'Connell said—that a feller could drive a coach 'n' pair clean through 'em."

"Get up on the box, uncle, an' bust it wide open," Owen laughed.

"I know one thing," the patriarch asserted: "the Englishers won't buy into no lawsuit; they won't touch a mine that the title ain't as clear's a Colorado sky."

Owen slapped his thigh. "Gad! I get you, uncle—I get you! I'll tell that bunch of Johnny Bulls that I'm part owner."

"Don't you do it, son; don't bet till you've drawed a good hand. I know a purty able lawyer here that'll tie up that deal so dang tight the Englishers'll go back to London an' dump the sov'reigns into a safe place. By heck, they will! This lawyer's got 'bout fifty ways o' cannin' a crook—'bout fifty ways; he's game too. I've

see him lose a thousan' on a hawse an' grin over it same's someone had tickled him in the ribs."

"Me for that lawyer, uncle. I think my fellow is just a dub *avocat*."

"This chap'll put in a caution agen the property—I guess that's what they call it, a caution—an' when Dubois an' his buyers see that innercent leetle item in the newspapers they'll be callin' an' sendin' their cards up to Mr. Owen's room. Dubois'll want to kiss you on the cheek."

"You've got it, uncle," Owen declared. "You've run with the right bunch to educate you."

"Yes, sir; a man can't deal on honor with thieves. You put in a declaration that you want to bring a witness down from the minin' country to prove your suit; mos' like it'll take you a couple of months to find that man. An' the absence of 'em sov'reigns'll make Dubois' heart grow fonder. There'll be some promoter puttin' this deal through, an' he'll want to finger his commission, not carin' a hang who gets the money."

"You're right, uncle—there is. Ben Strong; he'll hound these guys to settle," Owen agreed eagerly.

"It's jus' the same's hawse racin'; a feller's got to declare somebody in or they'll put his hawse over the rail," the patriarch sighed. "To-morrer I'll take you over to see this lawyer ——"

"Good! Now let's talk about something else," Stewart declared; "you've had enough of my troubles."

"Mr. Andrews says Slipper Dance is well, Stewart." And Delilah's face reclaimed the sunny look.

"Yes; purty good shape, purty good shape. The track here is kinder sof' 'cause there's been a leetle rain mos' every night. An' Saturday there's a five-thousand-

dollar stake that don't look none too bad. Barney Lee had Slipper Dance entered in it when he owned him, an' he's got another hawse in it, Cornet; but if the track keeps like this Slipper Dance can trim Cornet."

"Well, uncle, you an' the racin' member of this firm of Owen & Co. will have to run that end of the business. I'll be danglin' Dubois at the end of a string." He turned to Delilah. "But don't come to me, girl, for a roll when you lose your money. Take a tip from me an' sell Slipper Dance."

Across the patriarch's impassive face there passed no cognizance of this thrust; with a hand he lifted the gray beard from off his throat and reached for the old gray slouch hat.

"Guess I'll toddle down to the Grapevine course. I'm havin' a new bar plate made for Slipper's tender foot that I guess is jus' a leetle bit better'n the one Barney Lee had on.

"I guess the one we got with the hawse the day I claimed him was his slow-runnin' boot—'cause he wasn't meant to win that day."

Next day Delilah sat up in the lounge waiting for the return of Stewart and Andrews, who had gone to consult with Mr. Bowen, the patriarch's lawyer. She had felt piqued over Stewart's disparagement of her racing venture; perhaps that very racing venture would pull him through in his mining deal; money would be needed—plenty of it, she knew.

Like most beginners in this fascinating enterprise she visioned the possibility of an El Dorado. The affair of Condor, where she had won twelve-thousand-odd with so much seeming certainty, had bitten into her blood. It would be lovely to be the one to supply the money to

thwart Dubois in his stealing of this valuable mine; it would be a delicious scoring over Mister Tootie, who looked upon her more or less as a pretty woman of whims and notions.

Then Andrews and Owen returned and came up to where Delilah had said she would wait. Owen had recovered his buoyancy; he was the boy Tootie redivivus.

"Uncle's lawyer, Bowen, is hot stuff," he assured Delilah. "He knows this Dubois—the little Frenchman crooked him once on a deal—and he says the way to negotiate with him is to sandbag him. He's now writin' out a caution against the Shinin' Tree claim; he'll file it in the lands-and-titles office to-day, an' to-night Dubois and the two Englishmen who are here negotiating the sale will read all about it in the evening paper."

"Splendid!" Delilah commented.

"An' I guess Sir William Macklin'll scratch his hawse outter that Shinin' Tree race," the patriarch vouchsafed.

"That's one of the Englishers," Stewart advised. "They'll all just sit tight now till Dubois clears this up."

A brilliant smile displayed the strong, even white teeth of Owen as he turned the chair toward Delilah to ask: "You haven't got twenty thousand bucks hid away anywhere, girl, have you?"

"Why, Stewart? It hardly seems enough, does it?"

"Well, this clever geeser, Lawyer Bowen, says that if I deposit a marked check for twenty thousand dollars with the Deputy Minister of Mines it would show my *bona fides*. Sounds good, doesn't it?"

"And knowing you as I do, Stewart, I fancy you

promised to put it in his hands to-morrow; a little thing like that wouldn't stop you."

Owen parried this mellifluous compliment. "Bowen says that the party of the second part, that *habitant* Dubois, will try to have the caution removed by stating that I'm an adventurer. What d'you think of that, known' me as you say you do? He'll claim he'll be put to a heavy loss unjustly, an' won't be able to collect damages. Get it? Why, these rocks I'm wearin' represent more money than the whole Dubois breed for generations back ever saw."

"You oughter put up that twenty thousand, Mr. Owen," the patriarch interposed. "It'd be a mighty good bluff; they'd quit, gallopin'."

"I've got a good deal more'n that, uncle, but it's stuck in mines, an' you can't realize on a mine as you could on a bottle of Scotch in these prohibition times."

"It kinder seems to me"—the patriarch interspersed little blank breaths between his words—"it kinder seems to me, Mr. Owen, that it's come a time for Mrs. Owen to whisper in Slipper Dance's ear that she needs twenty thousand dollars quick." And he leaned back and rolled his blank-wall gray eyes as if he had closed the matter out.

It was rather strange how this observation was somewhat of a continuation of the thoughts Delilah had been possessed of while they were away; it was like a re-echo of static.

"Didn't you say, Mr. Andrews," she asked, leaning forward in her eagerness, "that Slipper Dance was in a stake race Saturday that he could win?"

"Yes, ma'am. I might've said that he had a good chancet, 'cause he has."

Delilah turned toward Owen. "Tootie, I'm going to break you of that habit of sneering at my owning Slipper Dance. I've got a few thousands left of the money I won over Condor, and we can win that much—can't we, Mr. Andrews?" she asked, turning toward the Man From the Desert.

"You've got a purty good chancet. He'll be four or five to one, p'r'aps tens—a man can hardly figger what his hawse's odds'll be with the bettin' in the machines; it's diff'rent from what it was when the books was on. The bookmakers had their clockers, an' they jus' wrote up on the slate a short price whenever a hawse had a chancet. The public's diff'rent; they're boobs."

"Well"—and Stewart sighed resignedly—"as I said before, girl, you're running the racin' end of it; go ahead. If you make good I'll declare you an' uncle in on the mine deal. If I can hold Dubois up good an' plenty he can't settle with me under a hundred thousand at least."

"That's settled then, Mr. Andrews," Delilah declared, and her lithe, sinewy figure drew up in an attitude of decisiveness. "I'll go down to the course with you in the morning and whisper in Slipper Dance's ear that I need the money; I'll give him a lump of sugar, and kiss him on his soft muzzle, and he'll win—won't he?"

"He might; he'll come purty near winnin'—purty near. I'll give him a good workin' gallop to-morrow—that's Friday—an' Saturday I shouldn't wonder that he'd be on the job. I'll try the new plate on him to-morrow mornin', an' when he's been cooled out if he don't favor that off forefoot none I'll figger that we've got Barney Lee trimmed again."

Next morning Owen roused from his early slumber by Delilah's spring from bed at the jangle of the phone

call, was sulky; he complained that this being married to a racing woman was getting on his nerves; it would wind up in their being cleaned out.

Delilah as she quickly slipped into a serviceable tweed sang tantalizingly, "Hush-a-by baby on the tree top."

Of course, naturally, this exasperated the sleepy man; but Delilah, full of the wine of youth and glorious health, laughed, winding up with "If you'll just stay in bed for a week I'll land that hundred thousand mine money for you. Good-by."

And never was such a morning—a glorious crisp ocean of sunshine; a tonic to cause a healthy mind to essay and conquer great projects; to embrace a stout heart. The flat open of the Grapevine course with a rich green Wilton rug spread all over its infield; and, beyond, the blue waters of Lake Ontario stretching away to the gold-smeared horizon.

Like happy spring birds perched on the rail of the course were horse watchers; clockers, stable boys; a continuous ripple of badinage evoking laughter such as is heard at playtime in a school yard.

And the thoroughbreds, too, were at play. Fed and groomed and rested, like athletes in training, they were as if they homed in some rich-foddered prairieland where drudgery had never thrust its hydra head of toil.

In ecstasy Delilah cried out in sheer joy, "Isn't it good to be alive, Mr. Andrews!"

"Kinder," the old man answered solemnly; "but life's so dang short that a man gener'ly gets to my age afore he notices what's wuth while an' what ain't. If I could begin all over agen I guess I'd get more fun outer life. It ain't chasin' the fas'-rollin' dollar that's the

whole thing; comes purty nigh jus' bein' a workin' gallop. 'Em boys perched on the rail is havin' more fun than Rockefeller. Outside of farmin' I guess there ain't nothin' in the world like chummin' with blueblood hawses. A man asked me oncet who was the finest gentleman I'd ever knowed, an' I answered, 'Henry of Burgoyne.'"

"Who was he, Mr. Andrews?" Delilah asked.

"He was a thoroughbred hawse I owned oncet, an' he was the bravest, purtiest-dispositioned creature I ever knowed. He was a gentleman."

Delilah gazed curiously at the old seamed gray face with its thin-lipped hard mouth from which this sweetness had issued; Jack Andrews, the poet, of whom men said, "Crooked as a dog's hind leg, unless you're stringin' with him." Some who hated him because of his cleverness went even farther, and declared that he would throw down his brother.

The two were walking across the infield toward Andrews' stable, which was located at the head of the three-quarter chute. As they approached the stall that held Slipper Dance, Delilah put her hand on Andrews' arm and checked in her stride. Over the lower half door the black head of Slipper Dance was hung, engulfed in the bosom of a darky, and a slim black hand was caressing the tapered ears.

They could hear the soft cadence of the colored man's voice.

"Ol' Slippah, you lonesome 'cause you ain' got yo' Zeb Clay to sing you some li'l' Kaintuck song. I cain't sleep, Slippah; I jes' cain't eat."

The horse drew up his head and tickled the darky's cheek with his mouse-gray muzzle. Then he saw

Andrews and Delilah, cocked his ears, and as if giving the darky a warning exhaled a rippling breath of unrest.

Zeb turned in alarm. "Scuse me, Mistah Andrews," he pleaded; "dat's my ol' hoss, an' I was jes' sayin' good mornin' to him."

"Lovely!" Delilah whispered.

"That's all right, Zeb," Andrews answered; "it won't do him no harm, a bit of gentlin'."

"Mistah Andrews, cain't yeh take Zeb on to rub ol' Slippah? Guess I'd 'bout wo'k foh 'nuff to eat."

"But you're workin' for Barney Lee; I wouldn't take nobody's man away from him."

"I quit dis mawnin', Mistah Andrews. I cain't stan' it. I jes' wo'ked in his bahn 'cause ol' Slippah was dere."

"Hire him," Delilah said in a low voice; "Slipper Dance loves that darky."

"I'll think it over, Zeb," Andrews answered.

They were interrupted by the appearance of Trainer Cooper and a stable man with a saddle over his arm.

"I'm goin' to give Slipper Dance his gallop," Cooper said.

The horse was saddled and brought out of the stall; a riding boy was lifted to his back, and Andrews turning to Delilah asked: "Would you like to walk over to the rail an' see Slipper work?"

"I'm goin' to break him right from the head of the chute here, an' let him rate pretty free right round to within the distance of the finish. I guess the clockers won't figger on that, an' the watches'll tell them nothin,'" Cooper advised.

But Delilah had been watching a pantomime. The soft dark-brown eyes of Zeb had been talking; they had

been sending a mute message that he had something on his mind that she should know.

"You go on, Mr. Andrews," she said, "and I'll join you in a few minutes. I've got to put a safety pin in my skirt; I dressed in a hurry this morning."

When Andrews and the trainer had walked away Zeb said: "Scuse me, missis"—he was opening the lower half door of the stall—"I'll jes' slip in heah, an' you stan' close to de do'r, 'cause Zeb got some mos' straordin'ry 'tic'lars to tell yeh. Ef yeh see any fellah comin' jes' give a li'l' cough."

He had closed the door behind him, and Delilah leaning an elbow on its top said: "Hurry, please; I want to see Slipper Dance run."

"Yeh own dat hoss, missis?"

Half annoyed at the question Delilah answered sharply "No!"

"Dat's right, missis, dat's right; yeh stick to dat. Tell 'em yeh own Drummah."

"But I don't own Drummer."

"Yes, yeh do, missus; yes, yeh do, foh suah. An' when yeh go back to de hotel yeh tell Mistah Andrews to give yeh dat bill ob sale on Drummah dat yeh gib Mistah Andrews de check foh t'irty-one hundred dollahs foh."

Delilah had been indignant at the darky's gratuitous suggestions; at his mention of the check she was startled.

"But I didn't give Mr. Andrews a check for Drummer."

"Yes, yeh did, missis; don' deny dat. An' get de bill ob sale to-day."

Delilah remained silent for five seconds; then her quick sense guided her.

"Zeb," she said, "I understand you are trying to do me a good turn."

"Suah I am, missis; an' I'm tryin' to stop a bad man f'om hahmin' a lady. Yeh jes' listen fas', missis, 'cause Zeb's goin' to talk fas'. Las' night I was sleepin' in a stall ovah to Mistah Lee's stable 'cause I'd got a headache an' didn't wan' to roll de bones wit de othah colahed boys; an' Mistah Lee an' his trainah was talkin' jes' at de doah, same's we are. Mistah Lee he's tellin' Trainah Burt dat Mistah Andrews claimed Slippah Dance foh yeh, an' dat yeh'd gib Mistah Andrews a check for t'irty-one hun'ed dollahs, an' dat a frien' ob his had heahed Mistah Andrews tell yeh aftah de race ar Orwo'th Park dat yeh'd got Slippah Dance in de claim."

"Ah!" This exclamation had been wrung from Delilah by her remembrance of that very incident.

Zeb thought she had coughed a warning. "Am somebody comin,' missis?" he whispered.

"No—go on."

"Den he tells Trainah Burt what to do. Dey's goin' to let Slippah Dance win to-morra, an' run second wid Cohnet; den de trainah'll lodge a 'jection wid de stewa'ds dat Slippah Dance didn't run in his ownah's name, an' dat Mistah Andrews broke de rules when he claimed de hawse foh anothah pahty. Den de stewa'ds'll suah take dat race 'way f'om ol' Slippah an' gib it to Cohnet. Mistah Lee am goin' bet heaby on Cohnet, an' he tol' de trainah dat you' husban' 'd bet heaby on Slippah Dance an' it'd break him, 'cause he's got some big minin' trouble. Now, don' yeh see, missis, dat Bahney Lee has got it all wrong—'cause yeh bought Drummah?"

In spite of the shock this revelation had caused, a smile curled Delilah's red lips at Zeb's subtle strategy; it was wonderful.

"Yeh bes' go now, missis, to see Slippah Dance stretch dem beaut'ful long laigs ob his—'cause dat's all I know."

Delilah opened her purse and tendered Zeb Clay a twenty-dollar bill; but the darky pushed it away with his slim black hand, saying: "No, missis, yeh jes' hook me up wit' dat ol' Slippah—dat's all I wan'. Foh de Lawd! I'll get sick ef I don' chum wit' him."

"You'll chum with him, Zeb—I'll see to that," Delilah answered as she moved away.

It was twenty yards to the head of the three-quarter chute, but Delilah was only in time to see the black horse pulling up after his gallop.

As he turned and came up the chute toward them a dun-colored horse, a buck-skin with a curious patch of bright yellow hair in his tail just at the croup, thundered by, the boy on his back almost pulled out of the saddle with the eagerness of the buckskin's fight for a free rein.

"There he goes!" Cooper exclaimed, "Jist clap an eye on that fellow, Mr. Andrews."

"Some mover!" the Patriarch murmured. "What is it?"

"They call him Yellow Tail," Cooper answered; "he's a maiden three-year-old."

"If he's a three-year-old and a maiden, I guess he's just what he looks like—a mornin' glory; a deuce of a hawse when there ain't no other hawses to fight, an' when he's up agen it in a race, quits."

"Hank Armour bought him off Madden in New York," Cooper added. "I don't know where Hank got

the money to buy a horse; he's been up agen it for a couple of years."

"Well, Hank the Hush won't tell nobody," the patriarch declared.

Cooper laughed. "No, Armour's well named, Hank the Hush; he never opens his mouth only when he's goin' to eat. Yellow Tail's in the Haviland Plate to-morrow."

As they turned toward the stable Andrews' throat rumbled as if he were trying the experiment of a chuckle. "A maiden three-year-old that Madden sells oughter be in a race for ash-cart hawses; 'cause Hank must've got him for next to nothin'."

"I think likely Hank's startin' him to qualify for the consolation purse for beaten horses the last day. I've heard that an old darky in Madden's barn who used to work for Hank was rubbin' this horse, and wrote Hank a letter that he was good, but for sale cheap as Madden didn't like him."

"That don't mean nothin'," the patriarch declared; "Madden weeds out every year the hawses that don't show good form, an' most like give this skate to the nigger; then the nigger gets Hank to buy him for a couple of hundred, an' Hank thinks he'll find some sucker here that'll give him a thousan' on the hawse's mornin' work."

Cooper pointed at Slipper Dance, who was striding in front with the long springy reach of a thoroughbred. "That gallop hasn't affected his heel, sir."

"No, he ain't favorin' that off fore none. I guess that new plate is jus' 'bout right."

"I've pared down the frog some," Cooper submitted, "and that crack has just about growed out."

With the story of Lee's new treachery in her mind Delilah intimated to Andrews that she was anxious to get back to the hotel.

At the motor car Andrews opened the door of the tonneau, but Delilah objected: "I'll sit in front with you, Mr. Andrews. I've got something to tell you."

When they had swung out to the road Delilah related what Zeb Clay had told her. Regulating the gas and rotating the steering wheel gave the patriarch a proper physical accompaniment to the mental reception of this story; it took the place of his habitual beard caressing. So he sat entirely silent throughout; even when Delilah had come to the end of the tale the patriarch's attention seemed riveted entirely upon navigation.

"What had we better do—scratch Slipper Dance? You won't want to get into trouble," Delilah said after they had traversed three or four blocks in silence.

"No, I don't want no more trouble 'n I've got," the old man answered.

"If you were to tell Barney Lee what we know about him—that I overheard him plotting to pull Slipper Dance and interfere with Drummer in that race at Orworth Park—wouldn't he be afraid to do anything to-morrow?" Delilah asked.

"I don't want to tell Barney Lee nothin'; I'm jus' figgerin' how to beat him out; an' if he don't know that we know his leetle game it'll be easier. That guttersnipe is as full of tricks as a ship is full of rats. If you show him four aces he'd stack a straight flush up agen you. I'm jus' thinkin'."

"What about Zeb's suggestion as to my owning Drummer instead of Slipper Dance?"

"It's kinder bad policy to cover up anythin' that

ain't quite right by doin' somethin' else that ain't right too. There's been more tinware throwed away because of leaks than the factories'll turn out in the next ten years. I'm jus' thinkin' how to trim Mister Barney; how to jus' let him hold the cards he's got, an' draw a better hand."

Then the patriarch became submerged in his navigation, ostensibly submerged in it—sometimes growling at a man on a bicycle who wheeled into his path, sometimes voicing anathema against a street car that held him up.

Suddenly he exclaimed, "Yes, by hokey! That's what I'll do!"

The car, as if as astonished as Delilah, came to a sudden halt. There was nothing in front in the way of obstruction; no warning hand of a blue-coated policeman; they had just stopped.

"Has the car stalled, Mr. Andrews?" Delilah queried.

A gurgle emanated from behind the gray beard. "No, missis, I guess Elizabeth was kinder upset at me talkin' in my sleep." He laid his heavy foot on the starter, and as they bowled along with the merry clatter of increased speed Andrews added: "I jus' kinder made my mind up to draw a hand to beat Barney Lee's cards, or else lose the pot. I guess we'll trim that skunk. That was purty slip'ry of him, when he reads in the paper that Mr. Owen's up agen it in the minin', to try to set him afoot by takin' this race away. He's been nursin' that claimin' thing for a chancet to break your husband, thinkin' he'd bet heavy."

"What are you going to do, Mr. Andrews?"

The patriarch turned the gray eyes that held an almost whimsical look on Delilah: "When I go to bed

to-night I'm goin' to gag myself for fear I'll talk in my sleep an' somebody'll hear what I'm goin' to do. I guess if I was to tell you now Barney'd get it by wireless. D'you think you can trust me to play a lone hand, Mrs. Owen?" he asked.

Delilah put those expressive fingers of hers on his shoulder. "You can go ahead, Mr. Andrews, and don't tell me or anybody; the leak in the tinware is a great idea."

"It'll take money—it always takes money to make big money—an' I ain't got it."

"I'll furnish the money, Mr. Andrews. Stewart said that I was to run the racing end of the business, and I'll take his advice."

"It's a fine thing, missis, for a woman to obey her husband, 'cause she's promised to do so—a mighty fine thing. I guess if you'll jus' trust me with a couple of thousan' to-morrow mornin', you an' Mr. Owen'll ride back with me after the races to-morrow with 'bout thirty or forty thousan' dollars."

"Oh!" Delilah's eyes held the red amber light.

"Yes, missis. An' Barney Lee'll be tryin' to remember what his name is; maybe he'll be cussin'."

"I'll give you the money in the morning," Delilah declared; "I've got nearly ten thousand in the bank that I won over Condor. We'll just sit tight, Mr. Andrews, and spring this surprise on Stewart."

The patriarch, as if shocked at having roused this enthusiasm, lapsed into one of his characteristic gloom clouds. "Hawse racin' ain't like runnin' a bank, Mrs. Owen; an' things goes wrong. I'm jus' sayin' that we got a chancet—a purty good chancet."

"And I'm game to take it, Mr. Andrews."

"I knowed you was, an' that's why I'm goin' to put this trick over now. I've been hatchin' somethin' for a leetle later on, an' if it come off I calc'lated I'd cop enough to buy that leetle farm down in Kentucky for when I get ol', but I guess I kinder took a fancy to you, an' I'm goin' to turn that trick to-morrer for you an' Mr. Owen."

"For the three of us," Delilah declared emphatically; "you'll have half."

"After it's all over, Mrs. Owen, settlin' 'll be lef' to you; 'cause if it falls down you'll have to pocket the losin's. We're home now," he added as the car turned into the little street, and pulled up at the side entrance of the King James. "There ain't nothin' more to do," Andrews said as he sat for a second, "but jus' wait for the Haviland Plate to-morrer; I got it all thought out, an' we got a purty good chancet—a purty good chancet. Jus' tell Mr. Owen to go to that minin' deal with both hands; that you're sec'tary-treasurer of the association. Kinder don't sot him too high up in the air, 'cause good things sometimes falls down—they sometimes falls down."

"You're a brick, Mr. Andrews," Delilah applauded.

"Mos' fellers thinks I'm 'bout's hard's a brick," he said grimly; "but I guess a nice woman can make mos' any man loosen up."

It rained again that night; a series of warm caressing showers that just nurtured the track into a velvet softness, a gentle responsive cushion to the pounding hoofs that would throb its breast next day. The morning sun kissed the day into a happy awakening; the air pulsated with fresh buoyancy.

But Owen was pessimistic; he was like a man floating

on a sea of deep waters who is not seeking further adventures.

"Dubois has put in an affidavit that I have no interest whatever in Shining Tree," he informed Delilah; "and the frog-eatin' Johnny Crapaud has instigated the Red Ledge people to sue me for payment for a bunch of stock that I was to have as a bonus on that deal."

"But, Stewart," Delilah objected, "we have become specialists; I am to look after the racing end of it."

"I wish you wouldn't. I wish you'd give it up," Owen growled, holding, outstretched, a pair of military hair brushes, to turn straight-looking eyes on his wife.

"Well, I won't! That ought to settle it, Tootie—it will save friction. But why give it up?"

"Well, I don't want to round on a man I've palled with, but Andrews is too smooth for you; he's out for Jack Andrews. I'm out for Stewart Owen, an' Stewart Owen can take care of himself, girl."

"And a pinhead Frenchman has got you tied in a knot—you can!"

"I'll untie that knot, an' twist the string around Frenchie's neck. But it'll take money. I can't afford to gamble on horses now—this mine's a bigger thing."

"I'm not asking you for any money, Tootie; I've got my own; and it didn't come out of your pocket."

"You'll lose it back, that's what always happens in racin'. Better to turn your ten thousand over to me to plank down to hold Shinin' Tree."

"Stewart"—Delilah slipped back to the floor the slim foot on which she had been lacing a shoe—"your sudden conversion to worldly wisdom is refreshing; but it makes me very, very tired. I'm going down to breakfast."

After breakfast Delilah crossed the street to the bank and drew twenty-five hundred dollars; back at the hotel she gave two thousand to Andrews, saying: "I think we're in luck—I feel it; it rained last night, and that's good for Slipper Dance, isn't it?"

"Yes, Mrs. Owen; the track ain't heavy—it's jus' like a carpet. We got a good chancet, a purty good chancet."

"You just handle this money as you like, Mr. Andrews," she said; "you needn't ask me anything about it."

"Yes, missis, that's the best way; I been put away more'n oncet by fellers that was in with me botherin' an' gettin' me fussed. Soon's the race is over I'll turn the funds over to you—if there is any. I see Barney down to the track this mornin'; him an' Burt is passin' me, an' Lee says somethin' to his trainer, an' Burt he turns an' grins at me. I guess he won't grin none after the Haviland Plate. I guess I'll come nigh laughin' myself, though I don't laugh none too much."

All the way down to the Grapevine in the chariot that Andrews called Elizabeth, the patriarch drooped, sombre, gray, like the figure of Time, over the spoked wheel in his grasp. And Owen, his broad shoulders thrown back against the seat, puffed strenuously, moodily, at a big black cigar.

Once he took the Havana from his lips to whisper: "What's the idea, girl? What's that mournful cuss goin' to do?"

For Delilah, back at the hotel, had told Stewart that Barney Lee was going to try to put over something.

"I don't know, and I don't want to," Delilah whispered back sullenly. "When you're buying a mine

you send an engineer to look at it and you leave it to him; that's what I'm doing."

The Haviland Plate was the third race. Delilah had been advised by Andrews to refrain from going to the saddling paddock, as Lee would have her watched for any evinced interest in Slipper Dance. So she sat on the club steps with Stewart.

From the jockey board across the track she saw that there were ten starters. The race itself was a mile—once around the track.

Cornet was Number 1; he had the rail position. Number 2 was Yellow Tail; then down in seventh place was Slipper Dance. Even this was an invitation to Owen to grouse.

As they sat on the club steps he said: "Your horse couldn't've picked a worse spot if he'd tried. He's near the middle of the bunch, an' he'll get pinched off before the first turn. I guess Barney Lee's got a pull with somebody, 'cause he's got the rail."

"Oh!" exclaimed Delilah, looking across the track, "that good jockey, Soren, is ridding that Yellow Tail horse we saw yesterday."

"Who is Yellow Tail?" Owen queried. "I guess he ain't much with one hundred four pounds on his back, an' this is a condition race."

"No, he never won a race," Delilah answered.

"D'you know what I've a notion to do?" Owen asked. "I've a notion to go down an' bet fifty cents on him—that's my idea of playin' the horses. You'll get as much fun out of playin' four bits on an outsider as you will a thousand on the favorite, an' no comeback."

"There's Mr. Andrews down on the lawn," Delilah said. "Shall we go down? The sunshine looks good."

When they had joined the Man From the Desert he said: "Well, I guess I'd better get along to the Iron Men an' buy a few tickets. I don't hear nothin' out in the paddock but Barney Lee's Cornet an' Slipper Dance. There's a couple others bein' touted as dark hawses—Lord Henry an' the White Lady."

"What am I to do, uncle?" Owen asked.

"Don't ask me, son. Any man that's got a hawse in the race is prejudiced—he ain't a good adviser."

"What about Slipper Dance?"

"Stewart"—and Delilah put a gloved hand on his arm—"just don't bet at all; Mr. Andrews is my commission agent to-day—he's doing the betting."

"Yes," the patriarch corroborated; "I'm bettin' aplenty for both of you."

"That bein' so," Owen laughed, "here's a hundred-dollar bill, uncle; I'm goin' to copper your bets. You take it in there an' bet it on some outsider at long odds—the horse you think might win on a fluke. Get me? Somethin' that'll be ten or twenty to one. I don't want to sit down an' have no bet."

The patriarch took the bill. Presently he returned to where Delilah and Stewart sat on a bench on the lawn. He took a roll of bills from his pocket, saying as he held them toward Delilah, practically hidden in his big hand, "Here's a thousan', Mrs. Owen; put it in your bag."

"Didn't you bet?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. I bet five hundred in there. I got the tickets in my pocket; an' your hundred, too, Mr. Owen. An' afore I left the hotel I got Chicago on the phone and bet five hundred; that'd save cuttin' the odds here."

"On your horse, uncle?" Owen asked.

"Yes, sir; on my hawse. I guess that thousan' is 'bout 'nough for to-day. Sometimes things goes wrong, an' a thousan' birds in the hand is better'n havin' 'em in the bush."

"What'd you bet my hundred on, uncle?"

"A long shot. I'll give you the tickets when the race is over; I don't want you rootin' agen Mrs. Owen."

"All right, uncle; I'll have the laugh on you, Lilah, when the race is over; you'll see me toddlin' down there to collect a thousand."

"Well, Stewart, we'll break even, then."

"I'll break ahead; there'll be no we to it. This is no fifty-fifty game. If the betters saw you putting five hundred in the fifty-dollar machine wouldn't that cut the odds on Slipper Dance—wouldn't they think you were sure?" Owen asked.

"There ain't none of my tickets for fifty—they're ten-dollar tickets. They was strung along, an' nobody see me bet 'em, either," the patriarch declared.

"There they come!" Stewart cried, for a cornet just at the paddock gate had voiced its silver notes.

And presently the ten thoroughbreds were seen streaming across the grassed paddock beneath the full-leaved trees, and then out to the course.

As the horses passed the lawn Owen said: "I wish you'd tell me what my hundred's on, uncle. If I was bettin' it myself I'd put it on that gray—that's a slippery-lookin' trick."

"Well, son, she ain't none too bad a hawse, that filly; you keep rootin' for her, an' that won't do no harm."

"Well, I guess I'm not on the gray, then," Owen growled; "but this is like playin' poker in the dark."

The Man From the Desert took the betting tickets

from his pockets, sorted them over, and passed ten to Owen, saying: "I guess you might's well have some fun out of it, even if you do lose your hundred."

Owen looked at the numbers on the tickets; then scanned the horses. "These're on that peroxide buckskin, Yellow Tail, eh?"

"Yes, son; my trainer tells me he's been workin' purty well. I guess he's 'bout the bes' hawse outside Slipper Dance an' Cornet; an' that's what you wanted—long odds; he'll be 'bout fifty to one, I reckon."

Owen slipped the tickets into his vest pocket, saying: "Come on, you peroxide! Five thousand for me if you win!"

"An' he's got a good boy up—Soren," the patriarch reasoned. "That's one reason why I put your money on him."

The horses had passed down beyond the starter's stand and were wheeling to come back.

"I'm sure Slipper Dance will win, Mr. Andrews," Delilah said; "he looks so well." Something she had overlooked flashed into her mind. "But what are Slipper Dance's odds? We won't win enough, only betting a thousand—we need so much."

"Well, it don't do to lose too much; an' I'll tell you, Mrs. Owen, Slipper Dance might not win."

"Has anything gone wrong?" she asked, a tremble of concern in her voice.

"Nothin' yet, Mrs. Owen. I guess we'd best jus' worry none till after the race; p'r'aps Barney Lee'll be doin' the worryin' then; he's got a purty good chancet of doin' the worryin'."

Owen stood up on the bench, lifting Delilah to a place beside him. Andrews lifted his big frame awk-

wardly to the bench and spun his glasses out to a focus. Just in front of where the three stood, a kaleidoscope of colors—yellow, green, orange, red, purple, blue—flashed by, just as if one had rolled a cylinder with the brilliant-colored bits of glass tumbling in splashed array.

The bay and the buckskin, Cornet and Yellow Tail, raced in front; with the black, Slipper Dance, fighting his way in a bunch of racers half a length back.

At the first turn, fifty yards, Yellow Tail running with demoniac speed had pinched off the bay; and as they rounded the turn the red-sleeved black jacket of Soren was seen in front, the blonde-crested tail of the buckskin whisking the nose of Cornet, who galloped at his heels.

The gray mare, the White Lady, was lapped on Cornet, and the black head of Slipper Dance rose and fell on the quarters of the gray.

Opposite the stand, halfway of the back stretch, the buckskin was running two lengths in front, and the easy swing of his stride, like the flow and ebb of lazy waters, told that the gallop was frictionless, that there a perfect physical construction moved without loss of power.

And like a gull soaring with spread wing on a gentle breeze the red-armed black jacket seemed to float with an undulating movement that caused Andrews to mutter: "That's the smoothest-runnin' hawse I ever see."

"That's my horse, Yellow Tail!" Owen chirped. "They can't live with him. See that, uncle?"

The open space between the buckskin and the bay had grown into four lengths; and Slipper Dance had pushed his black head and neck in front of the bay.

Clinging to the black like a leech was the slim-gutted

gray mare, the White Lady. Rounding into the lower turn the buckskin increased his lead.

Andrews through his powerful glasses could see that Soren was being pulled out of the saddle with the eager desire of Yellow Tail. And his own boy, Kelly, was shaking up the black, urging Slipper Dance to take a position behind that flaunting beaconlike tail so that as they rounded into the stretch he could pick and choose.

The patriarch swept his glasses back to the cerise figure on Cornet.

"Billy Wells is ridin' to orders," Andrews murmured; "he's watchin' Slipper Dance, an' as they swing inter the straight he'll lap his hawse on the black's quarter an' help shoo Slipper Dance in. I'll bet Barney Lee up in the stand is figgerin' he's got 'em placed, one, two."

"An' Yellow Tail'll spill the beans!" Owen almost shrieked the words. "He'll spill the beans! Come on, you peroxide!"

There was cause for this ebullition of optimism, for the buckskin had slipped around the turn with the easy glide of something that was pulled by a string. And he was at least ten lengths in front; ten lengths, and Andrews could see that Soren was holding the buckskin to check his mad flight; the boy had not moved; his arms were flat against the buckskin neck, and his arched body rose and fell in the short stirrups as the rhythmic form beneath him swung along like a duck on the wing.

Cries went up from the watchers, tangented queries: "What is that thing out in front? That'll win! He's making a run-away race of it!"

A bull-throated man bellowed: "That's Yellow Tail; he'll blow up! He can't keep that pace up; the boy on

his back must be a danged fool to run his horse into the ground!"

Somebody yelled, "There comes Cornet!" Another cried, "Come on, you good old Slipper Dance! Come on, you Kelly!" For the boy on the black, and Wells on Cornet, had gone to the whip.

A sardonic smile curled the thin lips of the patriarch. "Poor old Kelly!" Owen heard him mutter. "He's been kiddin' himself that Yellow Tail'd quit an' come back to him. Now he's gettin' feared, an' I guess that Wells is wonderin' what's up. The buckskin's got 'em both guessin'."

"Is Slipper Dance beat?" Delilah gasped. Then she snapped her gloved fingers and sobbed, "Come on, Slipper Dance! Come on, my pet! Oh, Kelly, ride him, ride him!"

But still out in front, a heartbreak to both bay and black, and cerise and green, the yellow fringe on that swishing tail gleamed mockingly in the yellow sunlight. It was like the white flag of a speeding antelope.

Owen was dancing a cancan of ecstasy. "Come on, you little runt, buckskin!" he cried. "Shoot him over, Soren; you've got him down the alley. Come on, you!"

The clamor of the crowd had died out; the appalling thing of that buckskin jack rabbit a dozen lengths in front of the favorites had wiped out the stirring effects of contest. It was like a dream, unreal; it wasn't a race, it was something of accident that had happened.

"I guess it's all over," the patriarch said, lowering his glasses as the mob on the lawn in front of the grand stand cut off his vision. "Yellow Tail'll jus' romp in; there ain't nothin' to it but the buckskin. They can't

catch him now. He's got everythin'—speed, an' a lightweight."

He felt fingers on his arm that trembled as their owner, Delilah, slipped down to a seat on the bench.

And Owen, as the buckskin flashed past the winning post all by himself, cut the air with a sweep of his hat and cried, "Oh, you boy, you! I'm some picker!"

Then he jumped down, jerked the tickets from his pocket and vibrated them in front of Delilah's eyes, chortling: "What about Tootie, Lilah? That skate was fifty to one, they say, an' me all by my lonely on him. Five thousand bucks to buy fodder!" He threw out his massive chest, stroked the tickets affectionately, and sat down, singing, "Oh, you boy, you!"

A ghastly hush hung over the throng of people; nobody had bet on Yellow Tail. A stranger had slipped into the house and eaten the banquet on the table. All the minds there had received a rebuke; their judgments had been set awry.

Then the numbers were dropped into place: 2, 7, 1: Yellow Tail, Slipper Dance, Cornet.

"It couldn't be helped, Mr. Andrews," Delilah said sympathetically as the patriarch adjusted his angular frame to the bench. "You did the best you could; we'll win out next time."

"Yes," the old man said, exuding a great sigh that might have been one of relief or despair; "yes, I jus' done the bes' I could playin' agen that shark, Barney Lee. I guess he's up in the stand there somewhere cussin' the maker of little apples."

The three placed horses were now passing in to the picket-fenced inclosure at the judges' stand. Their saddles were stripped by the jockeys, the gaudy-jacketed

string of manikins popped in one door and out of another on the path that led over the weighing-in scales.

Then the burly clerk of the scales was seen to mount the steps that led to the judges' stand; and next instant, at a sign from the judge, a red board, lettered "Official," was strung along beneath the three numbers.

"Yellow Tail wins!" the patriarch commented dryly.

He drew a bunch of betting tickets from his pockets, and dropped them in Delilah's lap, saying: "I guess that'll 'bout put Mr. Owen's mine on its hind legs. He had his laugh, but who laughs las' laughs bes'."

"What—what?"

Delilah was staring at the number on the tickets, 843. "Why, Mr. Andrews!" she gasped. "These—are—on—Yellow Tail!"

"Guess that's right, missis; that's the way I bought 'em. Five hundred on Yellow Tail, that's the way I played 'em; an' five hundred bet in Chicago. An' there goes the odds—he pays one hundred four to two—that's fifty-two dollars to one."

"But—but"—Delilah's black eyes were staring in a fascinating manner at the gray, farthing eyes of the patriarch—"but why—Mr. Andrews—how did you know that Yellow Tail would win?"

The old patriarch took a tantalizing handgrip of his gray beard. "Nobody knowed it—not even Cooper—but I'm the man that gave Hank Armour two thousand dollars to buy Yellow Tail."

IV.

The Thumb Print

OF course Charter P. Thomas had taken a suite at the hotel. On the centre table of the sitting room stood a vase of luxuriant roses; they had been charged to the room account.

Charter P. touched the petals of a rose with his slim, girl-like fingers, drew an attenuated roll of bills from his pocket, looked at the money derisively, and then grinned like a mischievous boy into the pale gambler face of his companion, Jack Conway.

Conway watched this pantomime sardonically. He took a cigar from between his lips and growled: "Devilish funny, no doubt, but I don't quite get the humor of it."

"If you were dealing, Jack, you would."

"Yes, you're dealing, Charter P. I've got the man, and the horse, and you're in if you make good on the capital—that's all we're shy of."

"Cheer up, Jack," and Charter P. clapped his open palms together and wrung his fingers blithely. "Toronto is a sport town. Time of the Porcupine gold boom I took twenty-one thousand out of here on a pasteboard front, and if a chap I'd known in the West hadn't blown into town I'd have got away with a quarter of a million."

"A case of save me from my friends," Conway commented.

"I wired Bill Kennedy in New York to wire me a hundred."

"You're out the price of a telegram."

But Charter P. objected: "He'll send it; I gave him a tip on Amalgamated, and he cleaned up good and plenty—he'll send it."

They presented a remarkable contrast, these two *chevaliers d'Industrie*. Charter P. was a boy—a Peter Pan, dressed in exquisite taste; his round, boyish face suggested an impossibility of guile; while Conway had written in large type across his forehead the word Beware. He, too, was clothed with simple taste; but his face was hard, merciless, blanched of all human compassion.

"Let's go down, Jack," Charter P. suggested, "and sort over the offerings in the rotunda. I dreamt last night that a rainbow finished up there, and beneath the tessellated floor was a pot of gold." Then Charter P. clapped his palms merrily together and grinned.

The two men had not taken six steps after their debouch from the elevator when Charter P. came full upon the babe in the bulrushes. He fairly gasped, for he had last seen Stewart Owen six years ago in Butte.

Charter P. indulged in a quick, furtive reconnaissance. The big white diamond in Owen's tie, its brother in purity of water in a masonic emblem, the glittering blue-white star on a finger, were reassuring; the gods had dealt Charter P. four aces, cold.

"Old Timer!" and Charter P. swept a little hand in front of Owen, a happy, eager recognition in his eyes.

"Great alkali!" and Owen's powerful grip had crumpled the slim hand into a pansy leaf.

"My friend, Jack Conway, Stewart—Mr. Owen, Jack."

"Glad to know you," and the gambler's fingers were squeezed.

A twitch of Charter P.'s right eye telegraphed to Conway that the dream had come true—they had found the pot of gold.

"This is my wife, Mr. Thomas; and Mr. Conway, Delilah," Owen reciprocated.

Charter P.'s babe eyes brightened in appreciation of the well-gowned, beautiful Delilah. Inwardly he murmured, "Gee! what a stunner!" And he also fell in love with Delilah's diamonds.

"When d'you blow in, Charter P.?" Owen asked.

"This morning. Just up from old New York for a flutter. Mr. Conway has a few gallopers and we took a run up to dribble some jack into the iron-man to-morrow."

Owen showed his strong white teeth in a smile. "Minin' too slow, Charter?"

"Not on your life, Stewart; I'm in deeper than ever. I married a niece of old Kran, of Kran, Loeder—you know what they stand for in the mining world—and I'm Secretary-Treasurer of an exploitation company that's ready to buy up the Sahara Desert or any old place that's got ore."

"I can load you up," Owen declared. "I've got the biggest thing in a gold proposition on earth; I've got it by the tail pullin' it down hill."

"What's it called?"

"The Shining Tree, an' it's a bird. A vein thirty-nine feet wide—stringers, of course—assays run as high

as two thousand dollars to the ton, but an average assay clean across of seventy-three dollars."

Charter P. clapped Owen on the shoulder. "Great Scott! just what we're looking for; you give me your engineer's report, and a typed proposition, and I'll put it through in thirty days—I don't want any option. You come back to New York with me, Stewart; I'll pay all your expenses. What's the price?"

"A million."

"Good heavens! have you lost your nerve, boy? *A million!* Are you trying to beat out Rockefeller on giving away money? What's come over you?" Charter P. almost cried in his grief over his friend's foolish lack of thrift.

"Now, Stewart," he added, when he had recovered from his sorrow, "I'm going to be deuced busy to-day with Mr. Conway, because we've got to feed the bird we're going to kill to-morrow. Suppose you come to my room to-night, after dinner, and we'll go into this thing. By that time, I fancy, I'll have a prescription from a doctor, and if we can't do any business we can talk over old times."

"I'll do that little thing, Charter P." Owen acquiesced.

"Oh, by the way, Stewart, I've got a wired draft coming through from New York for fifty-one hundred dollars: do you know the telegraph people here—could you identify me?" Charter P. asked. "All you'd need to do is phone the manager that I'm here, and really am Charter P. Thomas."

"Sure thing! I'll phone the manager, Howard, that Charter P. Thomas is here in the hotel and I know him.

That'll be all you need in the way of identification unless you want—"

"No, no; don't want any endorsing, just identification, that's all, Stewart," and Charter P. clapped his little hands together and wrung his fingers, as if he washed out the whole matter.

As Stewart and Delilah moved away, Conway turned his cold eyes on his companion commendingly. Fifty-one hundred, boy—not so bad. Rather quick on the trigger, I must say."

Charter P. grinned. "That bird Owen belongs. He's been stung so often before he cut his eye teeth that he's gun-shy of a touch. I don't want him to avoid us—see, Jack. That's why I suggested the phone for identification."

"There are your two friends—they're at the fourth table down," Delilah said, as she sat down at dinner with her husband that evening. "And I'll tell you candidly, Stewart, I don't like either of them."

"That suits me, Lilah. I don't want you to like any man."

"No chance—I never did."

"Never?"

"Stewart, you're tiring. An inquisitive man is impossible. I mean that Mr. Charter P. is too too, if you can understand that. And Conway—his eyes make me shiver."

"As to Conway, girl, he carries the danger signal so manifestly that anybody that falls for him ought to; but Charter P. is one of those good-natured, good-hearted misplacements that a fellow can't help but like. And he's clever, too—clever as a whip. His people are

really good people, rich. And Charter P. has done some awfully clever things."

"What has he done that's very clever. I wouldn't—"

"Well, he's kept out of jail, and considering everything, I think that was pretty smart of Charter P. But if he is married into the Kran, Loeder group he might be able to place the Shining Tree in New York. I'm going to see what he's got. If either Charter P. or Conway slip a cold deck on me I'll know it, and just tear up the cards. See, girl?"

Charter P. and Conway finished their dinner, and as they passed the table at which Owen sat, the little man asked:

"How would you like to come up to the room when you've finished your dinner, Stewart. Will you excuse him, Mrs. Owen?"

"I was going to stick around a bit to wait for a friend." Owen answered.

"Leave word for him to come up," Charter P. suggested. "I've got *that*—" and he smiled.

"All right, boys," Owen agreed; "I'll be up soon."

"Right-o! 234 is the room."

When the two friends had passed on, Owen said, "I'll leave a note in Jack Andrews' box, Lilah, but if you see him, or he calls up the room, tell him to come up to 234. The old gent likes a snifter, he likes the smell of it on his whiskers. You see, Jack's got Red Devil in a race to-morrow, an' Yellow Tail's in the same race. Of course, as you know, Yellow Tail runs in the name of his trainer, Hank Armour, though he belongs to the old man. So far the idea is that Red Devil's to win, because Yellow Tail will be backed by the public on the strength of his last race. The old man, even with

me, is pretty canny 'bout what he says, but I know that's the idea. I guess Yellow Tail could win if he didn't eat too big a breakfast or somethin'. That's what I want to see Andrews about to-night—he was goin' to let me know definite."

"I'll tell you something, Stewart," Delilah said thoughtfully. "I know that Mr. Andrews is worried about Armour. It seems that Hank is sore over the division of the winnings on Yellow Tail; he thinks he didn't get enough."

"I guess that's why the old man said he'd let me know to-night—he wanted to get that straightened out," Owen said thoughtfully. "But Jack'll get it right; that mud-head's no match for the old man if it comes to a question of dog eat dog."

Half an hour later Charter P. Thomas was saying, as he tipped the Roderick Dhu bottle to dribble amber liquid into three glasses: "Stewart, if the Shining Tree mine is what you say it is, I can place it in New York for two millions."

"I was wondering if you'd dropped out of the minin' game, Charter P. I hadn't heard of you in that line for three or four years," Owen commented.

"Dropped out, is good, Stewart," and the little man's round face lighted up like a laughing moon. "That's what happened six years ago, wasn't it. I had a four-thousand-foot fall with a parachute."

"I thought you went farther," and Owen laughed. "I thought you'd gone clean through to China. That was over the Lucky Mike mine, wasn't it?"

"The *Unlucky* Mike—you almost got it. Some people make money out of their business to race horses,

but I hooked up with Conway over the ponies and get enough out of the game to play the mines. What d'you know about that, Stewart?"

"Damn funny! if you'll pardon the profanity."

"We've made some real old time killings, haven't we, Jack?" Charter P. appealed to his sombre friend.

Conway nodded.

"I've been playin' the ponies a bit myself," Owen admitted; "not too much a loser at that."

Charter P. laid a hand of remonstrance on Owen's arm. "You stick to your mining, Stewart; you played that game like a lucky bettor, and unless a man's away on the inside with the thoroughbreds, he'd better give his money to his mother-in-law for safe keeping. Your best bet, from what you say, is the Shining Tree; you play it for a winner."

"Ting-a-ling, zing-h-h-h!" It was the phone.

Charter P. jerked the receiver from the hook, and Owen heard him say, "Just a minute—hold the line!"

He put a hand over the mouthpiece and turned a troubled face toward Conway, saying: "Jack it's that chap, Hank Armour, about that horse for to-morrow—he's down stairs there now, waiting."

"Tell him to come up," Conway answered, casually.

"If it's business, boys, I'll pull my freight," Owen suggested.

"It's business, brother," Charter P. declared, "but as to your pulling your freight, nothin' doin'! I haven't seen you for six years."

"No, Mr. Owen, don't go," Conway added. "This chap's got a horse that can win to-morrow, and from what Charter P. told me about you I don't mind your knowin' it."

"Come on up," Thomas called up into the phone; and coming over to the table he added, "I'll just tell him that you're of our party, see! It's a pretty good thing, but you don't have to chip in. You see, this chap used to train for Conway; he wrote Jack to come up and that he'd make it worth while. To-day we saw him, and he says that if we'll put down a big bet he'll shoot this horse over. He's kind of sore on somebody that welched on the last win they had—didn't divvy up proper."

The name, Hank Armour, had been zig-zagging through Owen's brain as lightning tickles the sky; now surely he must be in on this, must sit it out. Hank wouldn't know him by sight, but had probably heard his name from Jack Andrews, so he said:

"Just one thing, Charter; the father of money that's got this Shinin' Tree mine under option is a good man; he roosts on the top rung of the golden stairs, and if he knew I was mixed up in a horse play he'd bawl me out; he'd say, 'Man of sin, your'e excused from this deal.' Introduce me under another moniker to this Johnnie—call me Daly, George Daly."

Knuckles softly touched the room door, and Charter P. flung it open, admitting Hank Armour.

Owen looked at the man curiously; he had never seen him. And now, scrutinizing the heavy sullen face, he wondered why Jack Andrews had trusted Armour. Of course it had been as the Man from the Desert had explained, because Armour was a veritable clam in his economy of speech. But Stewart could see that Hank, like many secretive men, was a man in subdued rebellion.

Owen was introduced as Mr. Daly, one who bet 'em

up high, the sky his limit. Owen saw the suspicious look of hesitancy that drew the lids down over Hank's solid eyes, so he said:

"If you boys've got some little private deal on I'll slip away."

"No," Charter P. objected. He laid a baby hand on Owen's shoulder, and turned to Armour: "You don't mind Mr. Daly, Hank. He's been in with us in New York on a couple of killings. He's all right; I stand for him, and I don't burn up any good money giving things away."

"That's all right," Armour said, slipping into a chair, and lifting to his lips the glass Conway had half filled with the liquor of optimism.

"Now then," Charter P. said, "if you'll just give us the lay-out, Hank, put the proposition on the table, and let Jack here size it up—cause he's our expert in this game."

The shell of Hank's casket of secretiveness had been cracked slightly by the heating force of half a glass of raw Scotch, and with a sudden suspicious side shoot of the eyes towards Owen, he plunged into his verbal dissipation.

"I got a hoss that broke his maiden just a few days ago, an' he broke it good, he spread-eagled his field; he come home on the bit yellin', 'I'm hungry, where's 'em oats!' "

"Good stuff," Charter P. commented; "winners for mine every time."

"An' I didn't get nothin' out of it!" and Hank looked as if he were going to cry.

"The old game, Hank," Conway commented; "the

man that bet the money said he's been paid out in green goods, eh."

"The old son-of-a-gun cleaned up fifty thousan', an' hands me two thousan', sayin' it wasn't his money was bet an' he couldn't collect."

There was a little silence save for a tinkle of glass as Conway proffered Armour more of the encourager.

"An' now to-morrer my hoss's in a race, an' this ol' cuss 's got a hoss in too. He figgers that we'll make a boatrace of it, with his hoss, Red Devil, takin' down the long end of the purse."

"He's got his nerve with him, Hank, after throwing you down once," Charter P. commented bitterly.

"Nerve!—his nerve'd make a good web for the starting gate, there wouldn't no hosses break through it."

"And Hank, you want us to upset the boat, eh?" Conway queried, his poker face as placid, his gray eyes as stony as if he had said "Let us pray."

"U'll tell you what I want, gentlemen—I'm goin' to talk turkey. I've got to get mine this time. An' if the ol' cuss makes any kick I'll interduce him to the stewards for a cup of tea—an' he'll get it. I've got somethin' on him."

"Go to it, Hank; the sky's our limit," Charter P. declared.

The whiskey had suffused Hank's surly face with an angry red gloom; his eyes were defiant, like the pig eyes of a bear at bay.

"I got to have five thousan' bet for me, an' I got to have a thousan' put in my hand to-night, leavin' four thousan' to bet."

"Doesn't seem enough," Charter P. chirped blithely; "haven't you forgotten something, Hank?"

"I ain't forgot nothin'; I ain't forgot I was declared out of the last winnin's. My hoss, Yellow Tail—" Hank checked, the horse's name had slipped through the whiskey oiled machinery of his secretiveness.

"Yellow Tail," Owen murmured thoughtfully; "didn't he win somewhere this summer?"

"He won a week ago, an' he's right on top another race now—fit as any hoss ever was," Hank answered.

"Has he got much to beat in this race to-morrow?" Conway asked.

"Red Devil can outrun the others, an' Yellow Tail can beat Red Devil doin' anythin'; the ol' man knows it. He thinks the public'll back my hoss an' give him a better price on Red Devil. An' if I take Yellow Tail, which he calc'lates I'm goin' to, then his hoss'll be a certainty."

Again there was a little silence; Conway and Charter P. putting up a hesitating bluff to impress Owen, for their delicious scheme was to profit, and Owen to furnish the capital.

If they could have shot a ray of mental fluorescence through Owen's mind they would have been startled. If the horse had been any horse but Yellow Tail, if the man had been any man but Hank Armour, Owen would have come blithely into the scheme and gambled—on the level. Now he was about to double-cross these double-crossers. They were clever, and he also must put up a front. Apparently he was all they fancied, a rich happy-go-lucky, an easy mark for such experienced men as themselves.

"It's up to you, Jack," Charter P. broke the silence; "how does it assay?"

"Cut out that thousand, Armour—" Conway commanded.

"Nothin' doin'!" Hank answered sullenly.

"But men don't carry a thousand dollars around in their pockets," Charter P. objected. "We'll get it for you to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" Hank sneered; "that's the way I was settled with last time."

"Before the race this time, Hank."

"I got to get it to-night; I got to whisper to my hoss fust thing in the mornin' whether he's to win or not. He's on a diet. When he's goin' to win you can't get that hoss to eat too much or drink two or three pails of water; an' if he knows he's not needed he jus' enjoys hisself at the feed box, 'cause he's a good doer."

Charter P. coughed, lighted a cigarette, and ran a baby hand over the smooth glossy black hair that lay so flat against his little round skull.

"We put through a draft on New York to-day," Conway advised, "and the money'll be here in the morning."

"That'll be too late," Hank declared. "If I get a thousan' to-night I'll know you're talkin' turkey; if I don't get a thousan' with a guarantee of four thousan' bet, it's off—you fellers can guess about the race."

Charter P. turned impulsively toward Owen. "How about you, Stewart—could you get my cheque for a thousand cashed here in the hotel to-night?"

"I'd cash it myself for you, Charter, but I use the bank! The hotel wouldn't have that much spare cash at ten o'clock at night."

Charter P. switched to Armour. "Will you take a cheque?"

"No. I ain't sayin' it ain't good, but cheques gets stopped."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, boys," Owen said; "I'll come in on this."

He addressed Armour. "I've got a bunch of coin over at the Royal Bank, but I can't get that to-night. I'll see if I can dig up a thousand to-night, but if I can't you can depend on me bein' in on this to-morrow."

"There's another little thing," Conway interrupted, for he saw that Hank, obdurate, set in his ideas, was about to object, "and that is, that we've got to bet this money in the morning in New York. I'm in touch with my man there, and he'll put the bet down just before race time so it can't come back to the track. If we're going to bet five thousand for Mr. Armour we've got to bet about thirty thousand for ourselves to make anything. It's too good a chance to pike over. My man in New York has got a ten thousand dollar credit on my account with Joe Urder—"

"I'll chip in a third in the morning," Charter P. asserted.

"And you can count on me for my third; I'm in this to a finish," Owen declared. Inwardly he muttered, "to a finish!"

Hank had placidly listened to this financial debate; now he said; "Mr. Daly said somethin' 'bout diggin' up a thousan'. There's a racin' picture on here; I'll go an' take that in, I want to see it, an' I'll come back in an hour-an'-a-half. That thousan' 'd make all the rest of it look good to me."

"I'll get busy right away," Owen declared, shoving his chair back.

Charter P. said, "We'll pull this off, boys; we've just got to have confidence in each other; we ought to clean up a hundred thousand."

"If I don't get the money to-night what's your address, Armour, so that I can ring you up early in the mornin'?" Owen asked.

"I'm stoppin' at the Douglas House," Armour answered; "King East, 'bout half way to the Grapevine Track."

"Will you be there after the picture?" Owen asked.

"Yes, I'll go back home to go to bed. I've got to get up at five in the mornin' to work my hosses."

Owen had wanted this little bit of information, his idea being to find Andrews, and accompany the old gentleman to interview Mister Hank as soon as possible.

At that instant Conway held up his hand to command silence, his gray eyes fastened on the door in a gesture of intense listening; then he rose silently, tip-toed across the room, and threw the door open, darting into the hall. Then he came back into the room closing the door behind him; pointing a thumb at the open transom, he said, "I could have sworn I heard somebody smother a cough, I heard it twice."

"Did you see anybody?" Charter P. queried.

"I thought I caught a glimpse of a man turning down the side hall, but I missed him."

Owen grinned. "Every room on this floor's occupied," he said; "somebody's been passin', that's all."

"We should have closed the transom," Charter P. growled.

A frightened look hovered in Armour's eyes. He rose uneasily, saying: "I don't want none of this to leak till after the race, then I don't give a damn. It's the surest thing I ever had in my life, an' if I can clean up fifteen or twenty thousan' I'll buy a couple of horses of

my own an' that ol' cuss can go back to the desert where he come from for all I care."

"Oh, you needn't worry none," Owen soothed; "there wasn't anybody there—just somebody passin'; there won't be any leak."

"No," Charter P. agreed, "there's too much money in sight for any of us to take a chance on it getting out. You do your part, Armour, and we'll do ours; you get your horse tightened up and win the race. We'll put the money down; we've all got lots of jack, and we're all gamblers. You've got a sure thing, and we're sure-thing players."

"Well," Owen said, rising, "I'll take a scoot around an' see if I can make a touch for a thousand. If I can find a certain man he'll cash my cheque because he runs a night game and they have the jack there. If I don't come back you'll know I didn't get it; but I'll fix things in the morning, sure."

Owen's first move, was, not to find the man to cash his cheque, but to find the Man from the Desert, Jack Andrews.

Andrews wasn't in his room, so Owen shot down the elevator and searched the ground floor of the hotel for a gray clothed, gray whiskered, gaunt individual wearing a slouch hat. None of the bell boys had seen him about.

He got on the patriarch's trail at the side entrance. The porter had called a taxi for him. The gray whiskered gentleman had come to him in a great hurry, saying that his jockey was sick and he was going to see him; he had heard him say some hotel but didn't know what one it was.

Owen hovered about the rotunda for an hour, but Andrews did not return. He left a note in the patriarch's

box for the latter to call up his room when he came in. Then he went up to his own room and related to Delilah the particulars of this first chop bit of double-crossing on the part of Hank.

"Well, Tootie," she said, "it's the first time you ever struck a piece of luck by stringing with crooks. You have a passion for the company of snide gentlemen, and you generally get the hook."

"How come this is luck, Lilah?" Owen asked.

"Because you've seen their cards. Now Mr. Andrews can do just what he wants to with that race. If the little cherub that sits up above watching your juvenile career hadn't been on the job they'd have picked up some other easy mark and got away with it. We'd have bet our money on Red Devil, and they'd have won out on Yellow Tail."

"That's right, girl, it was a bit of luck, though I was pretty danged sore over it."

"And that baby crook, Charter P. is four-flushing, and the man with him, Conway, is a three-card man. Their game is to get your ten thousand to bet on Yellow Tail—"

"I said five thousand, girl."

"You said Conway planned for you to bet thirty thousand among the three of you, and they would get your ten thousand in the morning, to send to New York. They might even give a thousand of it to Armour—if they had to, but you'd never see a bit of your ten thousand, because they wouldn't bet a dollar of their own, they haven't got it."

"How d'you know they haven't got it—you a mind reader?"

"When you told me about the suite of rooms and the

vase of roses on the table I knew he was four-flushing' Tootie; from your gorgeous reminiscences of Charter P. in the West I knew that he was doing what you call a wealth-play."

"Ah, Lilah, you were guessin'; Charter P. is like a kid with candy when he's got money, you were guessin'—the woman's intuition stuff," and Owen frowned.

"Howard of the telegraph company was here in the evening," Delilah remarked with the air of a bored dismissal of the discussion.

"What did he want—to see me?"

"Yes, but not very particularly; I chatted with him."

"I suppose he didn't mind—not if you levelled on him with 'em lamps."

But Delilah was brushing her rich mass of coal-black hair, and seemingly addressing the mirror, said: "Howard wanted to tell you something about that draft of Charter P.'s."

"Gone flooey, has it?"

"No; it came through all right, but Howard thought you ought to know that there's a little coon hiding in the fence somewhere. You said to Howard, over the phone, when you identified Charter P. that he expected a wired remittance of fifty-one hundred, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, the remittance was fifty-one hundred—minus the fifty."

"Holy Moses! Just a hundred dollars!" Owen gasped.

"Yes. But don't worry, Toots; with a hundred to stave off the hotel, bright-boy Charter P. will land you or some other easy mark. I suppose that rich wife sent it to him."

"Holy smoke! if that isn't Charter P. all over; looks

like a babe and 's got a gall that would win a war. Dang little cuss! that's why I always liked him."

"But stringing you, Tootie, what about that?"

"Yes, by dang! I've got to get hold of Jack Andrews and block this before they do anything."

But getting hold of the Man from the Desert was some contract. Half-a-dozen times Owen called up the patriarch's room—there was no answer; half-a-dozen times he went down to the lower floor, but nobody had seen the man who looked like Father Time—nobody.

Delilah had gone to bed; and at last Owen turned in, saying, "I'll read for a while; he's sure to call up when he comes in; I've left a note for him."

It was past twelve o'clock when the phone buzzed.

"There he is at last, the old reprobate!" Owen cried, springing from bed. Then in a tone of disgust he said, "Somebody wants you, Lilah. I guess you're invited to Government House."

"Who could want me," Delilah complained, as she crawled lazily from comfort.

"P'raps it's Mr. Stella," Owen opined maliciously.

Then Delilah's soft voice called into the phone. "Hello! Yes, yes, Mrs. Owen. Zeb—that you, Zeb?"

Stewart watched Delilah's face wax into intensity as she listened for a full half-minute.

"Hold the line, Zeb," she commanded. "If they cut you off ring up again immediately." She turned to Owen: "Stewart, that's Zeb on the phone at some place near the stables trying to get Andrews, and can't, so called me."

"What's wrong?"

"He says somebody had got Yellow Tail out night-

riding him, and he wants you to get Andrews and come down at once. What shall I tell him?"

Owen scratched his head perplexedly. "Let me speak to him. That ol' nigger's just had a nightmare, that's all; he's full of bootleg whisky, I guess."

Then Stewart brought Zeb to a close-up on the wire, and wound up by saying, "All right, Zeb, you wait there by the corner gate, and if I can't get the ol' man I'll be there: keep tab on them."

Owen called up the patriarch's room. "That ol' cuss is still out night-hawkin'," he growled as he hung up.

As Owen hustled into a heavy tweed suit he continued: "Who the devil could be night-ridin' Yellow Tail?"

"Who, Tootie—why, of course it's the crook gang you're in with. Hank is doing the night-riding himself."

"How'll they get anything out of that?" He was now lacing his boots.

"It's simple. They get your ten thousand in the morning, but don't bet it; they want to make sure that the horse can't win, then they're ten thousand ahead. Hank doesn't know but that Andrews will put a jockey on Yellow Tail's back and tell him to win."

"Gad, you're right, girl—that's the idea!" Stewart had slipped a thirty-two calibre Smith and Wesson into his pocket.

"Better leave that here, Stewart," Delilah said. "You don't need to take a chance of killing a man now that you know what they're doing."

"Girl, I've toted a gun in the West where it's jus' like a piece of jewelry, it's as safe with me as a slice of cheese. It's jus' in case three or four of 'em pile on top your hubby an' spoil his pretty face. See—jus' a bluff that's all. I can lick the three that were in that room

to-night; the baby, Charter P., the washed-out gambler, and Hank the slow. Now I'm all set," and Stewart slipped into an overcoat. "I'll go along to Jack's room to make sure, then I'll take a taxi to the course. With a strong tip to the chauffeur I can make that in fifteen minutes. If old Jack calls up jus' tell him what's doin'."

He turned his handsome face, now alight with excitement, to Delilah, and she, thawing from her usual indifference, gave him a warm kiss.

"Momma love Pappa?" and Stewart laughed.

"Perhaps. But don't get into trouble, boy."

"Please may I take one swipe at a crook if I get a chance?" Then he was gone.

Owen asked at the office for Andrews, but the night-clerk hadn't seen the old man about.

As Owen stepped into a taxi he said to the chauffeur: "Full speed ahead, buddy, for the gate at the corner of the Grapevine Course; that gate that lets into the stables on the west side—get me?"

And as the rubber tires drew a hissing song of speed from the asphalt, Stewart spoke through the open window: "A five dollar tip, buddy, for speed, an' any fine is on me."

The car lurched forward at this suggestion, as if automatically it knew. It was a powerful hotel Packard, and the chauffeur was a sport. There was little traffic at that midnight hour, and as the black thing thrust through the night, men, late-outers, turned on the sidewalk to mutter, "A stolen car—auto bandits—I wonder who got it!"

Owen was exhilarated. The wind crackling through the open window cackled a battle refrain; his blood tingled.

"Good boy," he rasped against the pushing wind; "go to it, kid—step on the gas!"

As the car swirled around a swinging turn sixty yards from the gate of attainment, Owen clutched the driver by the shoulder, crying, "Stop here, buddy!"

The brakes screeched, and with a sigh, as if exhausted by the mad run, the motor hushed.

"Wait here," Owen commanded, as he flung through the open door and ran to the gates, beyond which loomed the ghostly white-washed stables, looking like sleeping ghosts in the back pall of the cloudy night.

As Owen checked his rapid run at the gate the figure of Zeb, his black face indiscernible in the night gloom, stepped forward from beside a big white wooden post.

"Dat you, Mistah Owen?" Zeb queried in a hoarse whisper; "where Mistah Andrews—didn't you get de boss?"

"No, Zeb, he was out," Owen answered in a voice raised just above a whisper. "Tell me what's trumps—have you been havin' a dream?"

"No, sah, no sah"; the darkey expostulated: "I been 'way down de Kingston Road seein' 'bout buyin' some chickens from a man's got some fightin' birds, an' when I'm comin' back on de suhbuhban cah—Good Lawd, sah! I see a boy ridin' a hoss, an' nachally I look right smaht see what 'tis, 'cause it ain't no time foh hosses to be out ob bed. I cahn see him 'cause ob de headlight ob de cah, an' jes 's we cotch up I see dat ol' blon' brush ob Yellah Tail peepin' out f'om behin' a sheet dey 've got roun' him. Dey've got a hood an' eberyt'ing on him, but dey cahn't hide dat tail. You see, boss, dey been night-ridin' ob him ovah to de uddah track, an' was dryin' him

out by walkin' him back dat long roun'd 'bout way home."

"Who was it, Zeb?"

"I dunno, boss, it wa'n't no collud boy in de saddle. He got his cap pulled down, but I see his white jaw."

"See the men?"

"I jes see one man; he come slippin' in t'rough de gate aftah I get heah."

"Was it Hank?"

"Oh Lawd! I don' know, boss. I'm scahed to get too close, an' it's mighty dahk. Den de boy bring de hoss in t'rough dat gate 'bout quahtah houh ago, 'cause he's walkin' him slow. I'm on de fas' cah, so I get time to phone up. De two ob dem is in de stall now, if dey ain't gone."

"Come on then, Zeb," Stewart said, "I'll find out who it is, an' I guess he'll remember. I guess I know who 'tis."

It had flashed on Owen that Hank's story of going to the picture show was all a bluff, that he had come down there to night-ride the horse, and it was all a clever plan put up by the crooked Conway to get Stewart's money.

Owen drew off his overcoat, saying, "Grab this, Zeb; I'm going into action."

He slipped the pistol from his hip into his coat pocket. "Now lead the way, Zeb," he said, "go slow and soft. When you come to the stall just whisper which one it is."

"It's mighty dahk, boss."

A turn to the right through a gate in a board fence, and down toward the first row of stabling that was the border of the grounds, Zeb led.

Suddenly he halted, and put his hand on Stewart's arm. Standing perfectly still they heard a sharp metallic click as if a key had turned the bolt of a padlock. Then there was a curious swish, swish, swish; as though a coarse broom brushed against earth.

Zeb raised his short figure until his thick lips were flat against Owen's ear, and whispered, "Dey've closed de doah, an' one ob dem is brushin' out de foot tracks wid de broom."

The gloom was intense, deeper still beneath the covered way that ran the full length of the stables.

There was the muffled sound of soft-spoken words; the swish, swish ceased; and Owen knew that whoever it was would move away in another second. He rushed, as though plunging on the centre line. It was the only way, give them no time to draw a gun, or to set themselves.

The stall was perhaps twenty feet away, and the men at the door heard him coming, heard the mad charge of rushing feet on gravel.

As he sprang beneath the roofed passageway, Owen's left shoulder smashed against a post indiscernible in the bloom. As he swung half about he crashed into the figure of a man and struck a sweep-arm blow, his fist landing on the corner of the other man's forehead, practically smashing Owen's thumb joint.

At that instant something soft, like an eight ounce glove, landed on Owen's jugular, and he went down, fighting against unconsciousness like a drowning man. He felt sleepy, he groped for the thing he was trying to do. He pulled his legs up, but they rocked idly like flippant groggy posts. Something or somebody was tugging at his collar; fingers that felt nice were rubbing

his temples. Why, yes, of course, it was Zeb, waking him—time to get up!

The dream broke suddenly, and he struggled groggily to his feet, the pain in his thumb helping him back to understanding. He drew a hand across his forehead; it was clammy, cold with wet perspiration.

"T'ank de Lawd, boss, yuh all right. Lawd! I to'ught dey'd killed yuh."

"I know. I suppose they've gone, Zeb?"

"On de run, boss. De big fellah, w'en I grabbed him by de coat, give me a kick, an' I guess I got broke shin. O Lawd! he's got a kick like a mule, dat fellah. De otha' fellow jes' landed on you' neck wid de stable broom—dat's what hit yuh. It's a mighty heavy one made outa willah."

"You didn't see who it was, Zeb?"

"No, boss; de action was too mighty fas', an' it too blamed dahk."

"Is the stall locked?"

"It suah am."

"Well, I guess we'd better get back. I've done the best I could. All the harm's done now that can be done."

On the way to the gate Owen said: "Zeb, don't say a word about this."

"All right, boss; Zeb can keep his mout' shut."

"Don't you speak about it to Hank."

"P'raps Hank don' need nobody to tell him 'bout it, Boss."

"If you keep your mouth shut there'll be fifty dollars bet for you on a winner to-morrow. D'you get that, boy?"

"Zeb'll be dere wit' de shut mout', boss."

Owen picked up his coat and just as he had started

toward his taxi there was the spit-spit, crack, crack, ghur-r-r-rh! of an automobile being started up in a vacant lot over across Queen Street.

With a yell to his chauffeur of "Get her started, boy!" Owen broke into a run.

He flung into the auto crying, "Get after that car that's jus' swingin' on to Queen—Twenty-five dollars if you catch it. I want that duck."

The car lurched, dipped out of the hollow of the earth-road, took the turn almost on two wheels, and as they struck the asphalt of Queen Street, there was the roar of the cut-out, and far ahead, like a twin star of Mars, glowered the red lights of the fleeing car in front.

Stewart sat with his head thrust forward through the open window, encouraging the mad driver of the mad machine.

"We're goin' fifty," the chauffeur panted.

"Hit her up."

"She's at her limit," the chauffeur replied.

Like cicadae the rubber tires were singing a song of speed on the hard roadbed. Once the car swerved clear to the illegal side, as something with a headlight thrust itself out of a side street, missing death and destruction by a foot.

Stewart laughed. "That Johnnie's hair 'll be white in the mornin'."

"If he got the number I'll be in court," the chauffeur responded.

"Got nothin'. He thinks he's missed a comet by a hair-breadth. Hit her up, 'buddy, you're gainin'."

"He's goin' some. Does he know we're after him?"

"Shouldn't wonder. I broke one thumb on his coco,

an' I want to have one more punch at him. Step on the gas, buddy."

"S-s-s limit!" the chauffeur gasped.

"You're gettin' him—you're gettin' him!"

The two gleaming red eyes in front were growing larger. Now, as the car flashed beneath an electric lamp, they could make out its shape; it, too, was a powerful machine.

"Some race, bud," Owen commented; "but you're ridin' Man of War—you'll win in a walk. Slip the grease."

Between flat open spaces they raced in the night gloom, the grass, the shrubs, and little orchards swooning by like clouds of fog. Buildings swept by racing the other way like toys blown in a strong wind. Their horn honked a continuous warning.

Now the car in front was coming back to them; half-a-mile and they would win.

Suddenly the breaks screeched, and Owen's broad shoulders hit the window frame, and but for its holding grasp he would have shot through the wind shield. There was a despairing cry of "Hell!" from the chauffeur, for across the street in front of them two tapering fingers, white with black bands, twenty feet long, had deliberately slipped down from above to meet in a blocking of the way; there was the ding-dong clamor of a bell, and the puff, puff, puff! of a ponderous freight engine—they were at the level crossing of the G.T.R.

"My God!" Owen moaned, as he sank back on to the cushioned seat; "blocked!"

Then in majesty, like a huge centipede, the freight train dribbled over the crossing, a gigantic rebuke to the petty impetuosity of the eager Owen.

"Oh, heavens!" Stewart growled. "If I had my pyjamas here I'd go to bed. The other end of that train hasn't left the Union Station yet!"

But at last, possibly a ten minutes of at last, the red caboose, on its screeching wheels, had passed, a pushing engine at its heels puffing a derisive chuckle. Then the attenuated arms of restraint climbed slowly skyward, and the chauffeur asked, "What now, sir?"

"Let's get out an' push this car home, buddy—I don't give a hang what happens."

At the hotel Owen handed the chauffeur a bill. "Here's five for the try goin' down, an' another five for the try comin' up. You're some jockey, take it from me; we got pinched off, that's all. Charge the fare to my room."

Of the porter he asked, "Did two fellows come in here in the last fifteen minutes; a little round-faced dude, an' a long-faced cuss that looks like a parson, p'raps one of em with his eye in a sling—come in a car?"

"No, sir," the porter answered; "nobody's come in a car for near an hour."

Owen went up to Jack Andrews' room and rapped on the door. At the third tattoo of his knuckles a heavy voice queried sleepily, "Who's that?"

"It's me, Uncle. I got to see you for a minute."

The door was unlocked, and as Owen entered, the old man crawled back into bed expostulating querulously: "If you want comp'ny son, why don't you go out to the woods an' hunt up an owl?"

"Where's the switch?"

"Don't turn on that dang glare, son. I ain't been in bed long, an' I got to get up at five."

"Sure; there's plenty of light comin' in through the window from the street lamps," Owen agreed.

Then sitting on the edge of the bed he told of his Aladdin-like trip.

When he had finished the patriarch lay silent for a couple of minutes, turning the thing over in his mind—there was so much of it.

"I kinder half suspected that cuss, Hank, would do some dirt," Andrews growled presently. "You see, son, the way we divided that money won over Yellow Tail the last time—you needin' so much to prop up the mine—I couldn't afford to give him a big stake such as he was lookin' for. I give him two thousan', which was purty good for a feller was chewin' shoe leather for the las' two years; but he beefed about it, an' I been kinder watchin' him."

"Well, he aims to get even to-morrow, evidently, Uncle."

"Kinder looks like it, son. But now he's killed the goose; he's made it a sure thing for Red Devil. All we got to do is go the limit on the bay; there ain't nothin' to worry 'bout. I guess Hank was feared I might switch, an' win that race with Yellow Tail, then, you see, you'd want the winning's of ten thousan' they were to get out of you, so Conway put him up to make it a sure thing Yellow Tail'd get beat."

"That's the dope, Uncle; it's a clear case of highway robber—; they weren't even givin' me a gamblin' chance. Say, if Hank has got an eye in the mornin' ask him how he came by it."

"You plugged him, eh?"

"I sure did, Dad. An' I've got a thumb that'll be in a sling in the mornin'. I put a thumb-print on him

that'll be good evidence if there's any row over it. I'd like to soak the pair of crooks, Charter P. an' Conway, jus' after the same fashion. How'll I fix 'em, Uncle?"

"You can't do nothin'—they ain't wuth it. It don't pay to waste time gettin' even with cheap skates like that."

"Shall I call 'em down—blow the gaff in the mornin'?"

"Sure not; don't say nothin'; don't let on you know what's doin'. I guess from what you say they ain't got no money; they was jus' after your ten thousan'. I guess Conway was jus' stringin' Hank; they wouldn't 've give him a bean outer that; they'd jus' keep it, an' tell him that if he opened his mouth they'd spill the beans 'bout double-cross work. He's purty dang stupid, Hank is; he don't talk none, an' that's all he's got."

"What'll I do when they come to me 'bout bettin' the ten thousan', Uncle?"

The patriarch turned this over in his mind for a few seconds. "You'd bes' have a roll of a few thousan's in your pocket; when it comes to a show-down flash it, an' say you're ready to go on with the deal; ask 'em to put up their five or ten thousan' apiece, then you'll go together an' bet it."

Owen chuckled. "I get you, Uncle; I get you. That'll settle it."

"Yes, sir," the patriarch affirmed; "when I go down to the course in the mornin' I'll stay down. There's an idee galivantin' up an' down my nut that there's some right smart 'vangilizin' work to be done to-morrer if we're to come out on top, son. Nex' to gettin' a good hawse in the pink of condition there's nothin' so entertainin' as standin' a bunch of crooks on their heads, to

say nothin' of bankin' a fair amount of jack over said transaction."

"You're all to the mustard, Uncle."

"I was jus' thinkin'," the patriarch continued, "that if it wasn't outside of bankin' hours if I could take down in my pocket 'bout two thousan' dollars, that when that race was over we'd be kinder shakin' hands."

"I got more 'n that in the office safe," Owen declared; "I'll get it if you say the word."

"The reason is," the old man explained, "that I'll be hittin' the trail afore sunrise, an' I'll be toler'ble busy till the time of that race."

"I'll be back in a minute," Owen declared.

In five minutes Owen was back in the old man's room with the money.

"That's 'bout all, son," Andrews said as he put the sheaf of bills under his pillow; "you jus' tend to 'em crooks in the mornin', not lettin' 'em know nothin', an' I'll do my bes' with the hawses. Don't bet a dollar till I say shoot. I'll see you jus' afore the race."

Of course the moving midnight episode had to be rehearsed again to Delilah, and some arnica rubbed well into the thumb joint followed by a bandage, Delilah wondrously tender over it. She had not gone to sleep.

Owen took her face in his hands and kissed her on the eyes, saying with a little apologetic grin: "Say, girl, looks 's if you cared what happened the old man, eh?"

"Don't be silly, Tootie," she admonished.

"I guess I ain't got nothin' on you at that," and he patted her cheek.

As Owen ate his breakfast next morning he could see at intervals the cherub face of Charter P. Thomas at the door of the dining room.

"The vultures 're hoverin' close, girl," he confided to Delilah; "Charter P. is gettin' anxious to finger the coin. He's goin' to see it, an' that's as far's he'll get."

"Don't let it out of your hands for a second, Tootie, or it'll vanish."

When Owen came out to the rotunda Charter P. and Conway were discussing the quality of their cigarettes. They were as casual, as seemingly disinterested, as John Silver sharpening a knife to slit a throat.

It was Charter P. who said: "That party, Hank, has been keeping the phone hot this morning wanting to know what about it. He isn't going to win unless the money's bet."

"I've got an idea," Conway interposed, "that he means to win that race anyway, but naturally he wants to land something worth while," and the gambler winked at Thomas.

"But that's guessing," Charter P. objected; "we don't know that and we might burn up good money. But if he got five thousand bet for him it'll be a certainty. If we're going to do it we've got to get it off to New York right away, then get Hank up here, and show him a copy of the telegram that the money's on. What about you, Stewart?"

"I'll play the hand out," Stewart declared. "I got to wait till the bank's open."

"Good stuff, Stewart," and Charter P. patted him on the back. "You come up to my room at ten-fifteen, and we'll cinch this play. It'll net us a hundred thousand; we'll singe the books."

At ten-fifteen the door of Thomas's room was swung wide in answer to Owen's tap, by the obsequious Charter P., and he was waved to a chair at the centre

table like the prodigal being installed at the feast of veal.

On the table lay a pad of telegraph forms; a pen stood ready in an ink bottle. To Owen it was something like a scaffold with a dangling noose waiting for its victim, and he reflected grimly that if he hadn't known all about the plant, if he had been a rich stranger, how smoothly the thing would have been put over. It was an elucidation of items he had read in the newspapers of wire-tappers fleecing usually sane men out of large sums.

As a *hors d'oeuvre* Charter P. wrote out a telegram:

"Joe Urder

1437 1-2 Broadway

New York.

Bet thirty thousand on Yellow Tail fourth race Grapevine Course, Toronto."

He signed it with a flourish and pushed it over to Conway for his signature. Then he held the telegram up to Owen, asking, "How's that?"

Owen grinned—he couldn't help it, it was so rich.

He pulled a huge roll of bills from his pocket, as he did so covertly watching the gray hawk eyes of Conway. He had anticipated just what he saw there—an evil glitter of cupidity. Stewart Owen, the easy mark, was enjoying himself.

Charter P. bubbled over. "The long-green talks, Stewart," he cried; "what part of a million is there?"

"My share of the bet. And, boys, we're playin' for table stakes." Owen put the money on the table, his hand flat on top of it.

"What—what d'you mean, Stewart?" Charter P.'s voice was a gulp, a gasp.

"Just the usual, Charter P., no markers. You two gentlemen uncover your ten thousand each and we'll bet

it right here in good old Toronto. Ab Alden'll take it an' lay it off in Buffalo an' Chicago; he's as good as the wheat."

"But my money's in New York," Thomas objected.

"Where's the money, Charter P., for that draft on New York you put through yesterday?"

"It hasn't come yet, Stewart."

"Yes— it has; you collected yesterday afternoon, not fifty-one hundred dollars, as you told me, but just one hundred bucks."

The rosy flush departed from Charter P.'s face, leaving it a sickly yellow. He sagged back in his chair like an apple dumpling that had collapsed. At a snarling oath from Conway, Owen turned a pair of fierce black eyes on the gambler, and asked, "What's that?"

"Just this," sneered Conway, "you're calling Charter P. as if he were crooking you, and I don't like it!"

"Well, Mister Three-card-man, you had better let it rest at that," and Owen shoved the roll of bills back into his hip pocket.

"What d'you mean by that?" Conway drawled, not a twitch to his cold, merciless face.

"I mean,"- and Owen leisurely drew himself to his feet, "that if you two are on the level an' cough up your share of this bet, I'll play the hand out with you. But if you say one word I don't like I'll twist your damn scrawny neck. That's plain, isn't it? That's where I stand—I stand pat."

Conway was a cold-blooded gambler; he had nerves of steel; he didn't know how to be afraid; but he had a keen intellect. He knew that strong sinewy hand of the man who was built like a prize fighter would take him by the throat and shake him like a rat; he knew it.

There was a gun slung under his armpit, but this was no place for gun-play. It wasn't worth it.

Charter P. broke the tension. "Look here, Stewart," he expostulated, "don't let's get excited about it. We haven't got the money here, but we've got it in New York. This is a sure thing. Chip in. We'll bet the money there—"

But Owen interrupted. "All right, Charter P., you bet your money there, but I'll act for myself in this matter; I can keep my end clean if I'm my own agent."

Owen put on his hat, took a step toward the door, then turned, and his white teeth showing in an amused smile said: "Charter P., it's six years since you knew me, isn't it?"

"It's all of that, Stewart."

"Well, Charter P., I've growed up an' you've growed down. I've quit bunkin' my friends; you take the tip from me an' do the same."

Down at the track that afternoon up to the time of the third race Owen had failed to locate the Man from the Desert. Of course Andrews had said that he would be busy rearranging the involved criss-cross of Hank's entanglement, but Owen had swallowed this statement with a grain of salt; it couldn't possibly take every minute of the several hours to do the business; it was mystifying. He knew that Andrews was an eccentric, a misanthropic individual who took streaks of aloofness. At all times he was a man who took little interest in a race he hadn't a horse in. To him racing was a matter of brick laying, years of it had dimmed the glamor. He loved horses but he had no time for any equine fondling, mental or physical, except for the individuals in his own barn. Of course Andrews would be on hand

before the fourth race in which Red Devil and Yellow Tail started, he had said he would.

"I haven't seen the old cuss," Stewart confided to Delilah as he came back to the club lawn from a pilgrimage to the paddock; "if he was a chap that hit the bottle I'd say he'd found a cache of the strong stuff and was in the hay."

"Don't worry, Tootie," Delilah advised. "Andrews is always on the job, he isn't a fusser, the old gent is wise; he expects you to bet on Red Devil, and he generally waits until he is sure everything is all right."

"Sure thing, girl. Old Jack will be there with the advice, and I'm goin' to level two thousan' on Red Devil because—well, you know why."

"That is, if Andrews tells you to—he said not to bet till he told you, didn't he?"

Owen pulled out his watch. "It's ten minutes to four now," he explained irritably, "and the horses go to the post at four. I think I'll go out to the paddock an' see if I can find the old man—I don't want to miss this bet."

"I wouldn't do that, Tootie," Delilah objected: "you might miss Andrews in the crowd. He knows we sit here on the lawn, and if everything is all right he'll come to you and tell you what to bet on."

"What to bet on!" Owen sneered; "it's Red Devil an' nothin' else now the other horse was night-ridden. If I didn't know the old man so well I'd be suspicious he was givin' me the wrong steer, keepin' me off the horse. Or the old cuss may've looked up with some other owner an' they're makin' a boat race of it with Red Devil jus' out for an airin'. He borrowed two thousand of me last night—what'd he do that for?"

"Tootie, the only time to worry over a man doing

wrong is after he's done it, then you know what you're talking about. If I was to worry over everything funny you do I'd have a sweet life, wouldn't I. Besides, if you don't bet you can't lose."

All impatience, agitated by the gambler eagerness, Owen sat with his eyes glued on the little gate that led from the paddock to the club lawn.

"There goes the bugle!" he cried, as a little man standing at the gate raised a silver cornet to his lips and tooted the order for the jocks to mount their horses.

A steady stream of men poured from the paddock and hurried across the lawn toward the betting machines, but among them Owen failed to discern the sombre gray-whiskered Man from the Desert. He couldn't down the feeling of unrest, of suspicion; he was so in the dark, and any minute the iron betting machines might clang their rapacious mouths shut, and he would be closed out. His midnight ride, his struggle at the stables, the unpleasant taste in his mouth that a friend he had benefited had tried to rob him—all these things would be for nothing; and why? Would it be another case of a friend throwing him down? He knew that Andrews had a code of morals written on the reverse side of a silver dollar.

"Hello! there he comes!" Owen cried at last.

Delilah giggled, for the Man from the Desert, always sombre and grotesque, was wearing a pair of big yellow goggles, and as he strode solemnly toward them he was like an itinerant gargoyle.

Owen sprang to his feet only to smother the eager query with a gasp of disgust, for the eight horses were slipping through the gate of the paddock to the course; he would probably be shut out with his bet. The leisurely stroll of the patriarch was damnable.

Owen grasped Andrews by the arm when he finally drifted close, asking, "Quick what is it?"

"Tain't no place for you to bet, son," the old man drawled. "You're too late, anyway."

"I know damn well I am, Uncle—waitin' for you."

"That's right, Mr. Owen; I told you to wait. I had to kinder stick clost to 'em two stalls till the hawses went out. When you've got a cuss like Hank double-crossin' you you can't afford to take an eye off what's doin'."

"But, hang it, Uncle, I don't understand; I'm gettin' the worst of it some way or other."

"Well, Mr. Owen, we'll jus' talk it over after the race, an' I'll explain. I want to watch these hawses run. It's a kind of game to me playin' my wits agin Hank's, an' I want to see how it comes out."

"Yes, Stewart," Delilah interposed, "we won't have any heart throbs this time because we haven't anything on. Let's just enjoy the race."

There was the clang of a huge brass gong at the starter's stand, the thrusting rush of thoroughbreds, an indistinguishable roar from the stand; and now the galloping steeds were pounding the course on their way for the bitter struggle of a mile that tried heart, and courage, and sinew, and wind.

"Red Devil didn't get none the best of the start," the patriarch commented, swinging his glasses to cover the thoroughbreds as they swirled round the first turn. "It ain't too bad—it ain't too bad, though. An' Kelly has swung him in against the rail, nice an' tidy, nice an' tidy, boy! Lord Jim's in front, but that don't mean nothin'; he can't stay a mile."

Owen had swung his glasses up; he lowered them for

a second to say: "Holy Moses! look at that yellow skate go by his horses!"

For across the track on the back stretch a gold-colored horse, his blonde tail switching irritably showing that spurs were stinging his flanks, was running by the trailers, and before they had reached the lower turn was lapped on Red Devil who was now third.

There had been so much double-crossing, so much interwoven deviltry, that Owen's mind was immersed in misgiving. He voiced it: "That dang yellow thing with the peroxidized switch'll win it, Uncle," he muttered in a subdued voice. "There ain't nothin' the matter with him except speed."

"The finish of the mile is right here in front of us, not over on the back stretch, son, an' 'em two boys, Kelly an' Soren, is right where I like to see 'em—clost together. I kinder whispered both of 'em to act like Christians to each other," the patriarch answered. "An' Kelly's jus' loafin', he's jus' lettin' Red Devil keep handy for an openin' for his run home."

But even as the patriarch drooled, the blonde tail showed closer and closer to the leaders.

"The ol' man's just kiddin' himself," Owen growled inwardly; aloud he said, "Uncle, I believe Hank has put it over the bunch of us."

"Hank ain't put over nothin'," Andrews snarled; "'em two boys knows what they're doin', but Hank don't. 'Em boys is sittin' their hawses, an' I bet Kelly's tellin' Soren a funny story. Kelly ain't worryin' Red Devil none, an' the hawse knows it."

In a sudden comprehension, a revelation, Owen grasped Delilah's arm with a tenseness that hurt; for at the turn into the stretch the brown mare, Miss Swift,

showed a length in front of Red Devil, at whose girth nodded the golden head and blonde topknot of Yellow Tail—and Yellow Tail was next the rail.

To Owen it was a shoo-in for Miss Swift. His blood surged hot. Andrews could have put him on to the good thing, but it was probably a case of keeping the odds long; Andrews and the owner of Miss Swift would be on, and nobody else except a few piking bettors.

Suddenly the right arm of Miss Swift's jockey rose and fell three times. And now the bay and the chestnut were seen to edge in between the brown mare and the rail. They were gaining.

"The boy on Miss Swift has gone to the bat; she's done for!" Andrews commented drily.

Now the bay, Red Devil, was level with the mare; but still at his girth rose and fell the blonde topknot of Yellow Tail.

Owen's formulated theory shattered, he watched the struggle with a mind that floated. He felt that in the brain that nestled in the gray-thatched skull beside him was the solution of the race—that there it was already won and lost.

And the old man beside him was the most composed individual of all the twenty thousand that watched the steeds, he had ceased to comment; he stood like a grim something that Rodin had chiselled from marble, his face turned toward that long home stretch that was like a lane of destiny claiming the eyes of all the thousands in the stand.

Half up the stretch the duel, three cornered, was fought. Then there were but two, the chestnut and the bay. And a hundred yards from the finish, just beyond

the betting machines the blonde topped head of Yellow Tail nodded in front, and foot by foot he came away to flash past the Judges' Stand a length in front.

Owen's mind was a chaos. "What—why—how?" just words, galloped through his half-numbered brain. Had the shoo-in of Miss Swift gone wrong?

He turned to the patriarch, who, lowering his glasses, had dropped the yellow goggles over his eyes, saying; "I guess Hank dished us all, Uncle. He must've doped that horse so that he forgot all about his night-ride. All the satisfaction I get out of it is that I handed him a good healthy black eye."

The patriarch, shoving the goggles up on his forehead turned a pair of eyes full upon Owen, one of them set in a beautiful blueish-black aureola.

"You—you, Uncle?" Owen stammered, aghast.

"Yes, son. It was me you handed the black eye to las' night; it's me as carries your thumb print."

"It was you—you—that night-rode—Yellow Tail?"

"Nobody night-rode Yellow Tail, son. Me an' Kelly jus' took him out for a leetle walk, an' left the mud in his hoofs, an' rubbed a leetle soap into his hair to make him look's he'd sweated, so's to make Hank think he'd been night-rode. I knowed Hank could get half-a-dozen fellers in this town to put a thousan' on the hawse if they knowed he had a good thing. An' I knowed he'd do it after the way he worked with 'em crooks. You see, son, I went up to their room las' night as you lef' word for me to do, an' heard Hank's voice through the transom afore I had time to knock; then I guess I listened more'n a feller oughter do, an' jus' shot away to stop his leetle game. It kinder leaked out

there was somethin' wrong with the hawse to-day, an' that's why he started at five to one. I bet the two thousan' I borrered from you on him, which said winnin's we'll split fifty-fifty."

The Lost Stirrup

AS a florid woman stepped from an elevator on the mezzanine floor and started toward the grouped chairs and lounges, she checked for a minute and stood looking at Delilah, a hungry fascination in her pale blue eyes. She was like a famished boy with his nose pasted against the window of a confectioner's shop.

The younger woman's lithe figure rested in lines of grace on a lounge; an introspective contentment lurked in the dark brooding eyes. And how perfectly gowned the girl was; perfection of simplicity enriched by texture of cloth.

Then the stout woman, with an inward sigh, passed forward and greeted Delilah.

"May I sit here, Mrs. Owen?" she asked, a motherly smile bringing her face out of its ordinariness.

"Of course, Mrs. Wicks;" and Delilah made room for her.

"You are beautiful to-day, dear—beautiful!" the florid woman said, affectionately. "I get so lonesome for companionship that when I find you it's like nestling up to a bouquet of violets or roses."

"I get lonesome, too," Delilah admitted. "In a hotel this way one knows nobody, and my husband is busy always—or thinks he is."

"Husbands are not good companions, are they, Mrs.

Owen? Mr. Wicks thinks only of his race horses; of course they take a lot of looking after—one can't say anything; but I do get lonesome."

Delilah turned a gleaming smile on the short florid woman; "And yet I get tired of Stewart. I don't know what it is in men, but they have a wonderful faculty of remembering something one has, or has not done."

"And you can wear jewels, Mrs. Owen;" with a pudgy hand Mrs. Wicks patted the blue-white diamonds on Delilah's fingers.

"And that plain gold band you wear just suits you. I think all men love a motherly woman—women do, too."

A mental hunger suffused the weak blue eyes of the little woman. "Ah, dear, that's just the cruelty of life; if I only had children I wouldn't get lonesome. Here's Mr. Wicks," she continued, as a tall, gaunt, hard-faced man advanced, his hawk-like eyes searching the corridor for something. At his side was a slim little man.

The brusque manner of Wicks repelled Delilah. It was as if Fate had said to her, "I'll furnish you abiding proof of the void of affection in the little woman's life."

Wicks was in an unpleasant mood, for he had been trailing his wife and the room key. He wanted a set of racing colors she had been making, and was in a hurry to get down to the track.

"This is Jockey Soren, Mrs. Owen," Mrs. Wicks said. "Will you wait here, Billy, while I go up to the room with Mr. Wicks?"

Soren sat down beside Delilah, diffidently, modestly. His face was strangely intellectual for a jockey. It was the pale, thoughtful face of an overworked student; the

constant physical wasting to make weight had caused this pinched sombreness.

Delilah sensed an atmosphere of refinement in the boy; and when she caught his furtive look of admiration he blushed like a girl. They chatted droppingly about Mrs. Wicks. She was like a mother to him, Soren said, a warmth creeping into his tired voice.

Presently Mrs. Wicks and her husband returned, and Wicks took the boy away with him.

"I've been making a new set of racing silks," Mrs. Wicks told Delilah. "Our colors are light-blue with white star in the back. My husband has a superstition that he doesn't like to start a horse in a stake race with colors up that have been beaten."

"He's running a horse to-day, then?" Delilah queried.

"Yes—Viper."

Delilah gave an involuntary shrug to her shoulders. "Not a pleasant name, is it; but it's odd."

"Mr. Wicks names his horses in the line of their breeding if he can. There was a sire, Marc Antony, in this No. 4 family—the great Man of War belongs to that family, you know. He named one filly Cleopatra—" Mrs. Wicks gasped, stared at Delilah out of her pale-blue eyes, and exclaimed: "I've got it, Mrs. Owen!"

Delilah, rather startled by this erratic shift, fancied that perhaps the stout little woman had got something.

"You know, dear," Mrs. Wicks continued, "I've been wondering who you looked like—somebody that I had known; but I know now: you are like the pictures of that beautiful Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. Isn't it funny!"

"Droll," Delilah commented. "Sometimes people

say I'm like a movie star they've seen, but to be like a queen—that's lovely."

"I asked my husband up in the room if Viper would win to-day," Mrs. Wicks confided: "I wanted to tell you so that you could have a bet on him; but he says that the horse didn't work well this morning, and that he's not going to back him."

Delilah's nimble mind dropped three grains of salt on this information. The hard gray eyes of Wicks were the eyes of a liar; the intense selfishness in them had been so manifest. And the new colors to play up to his superstition! that meant that he was optimistic—was trying.

She was possessed of no moral recriminations against the frank-faced woman at her side; the obliquity had been foisted upon Mrs. Wicks by her husband. He was as forbidding, architecturally, as a tall, gaunt, blasted oak from which the leaves of human feeling had departed forever. The woman's intuition that was accentuated in Delilah because of her vibrancy had told her all this with one look into the hard-faced man's gray-green eyes. The brief verbal contact between husband and wife had shown her that the placid-faced little woman was entirely subservient.

So she fyled away in her mind this Viper matter marked "to be investigated at the track," somewhat as a pleasing mental recreation.

"It's too bad, really, you know,"—the little woman was saying—"I was sure Viper would win this stake to-day. He's like a baby to me. When he was born his mother died, and I brought him up on the bottle. Why, he used to come into the kitchen in our little

place down in Kentucky, and nose about till he found pieces of bread. He was a weedy little runt naturally, having no mother, and my husband wanted to—well, didn't want to bother raising him, you see; but he was so lonely, the little chap—I was lonesome, too, and now when he races, if he's beaten, you know dear, sometimes I find my eyes wet. It's silly, isn't it—just over a horse?"

"Lovely," and Delilah patted the fat arm; "it's lovely, Mrs. Wicks."

"But he's a nervous horse; I guess that's because he hadn't a mother and had to kind of look out for himself when he was a little chap. We have an apprentice boy in the stable, Bud Jones, and Viper won't try a yard for him—just sulks. Father—that's what I call my husband when I forget—thinks Bud Jones must've beaten Viper when nobody saw him."

"But does this Jones boy ride to-day?" Delilah queried, casually.

"No, the jockey that was here, Billy Soren, has the mount, and Viper likes him. Isn't he a lovely boy, Mrs. Owen? You know his people were really a good family; but I think his father lost all their money racing—he was an awful gambler—but he's dead now. This little lad is keeping his mother and sister, and is saving up enough to put himself through college. Isn't that manly?"

Delilah was glad to hear this. She had been strangely attracted to the boy; nothing that he had said—just atmosphere; his soft, firm voice, his straight eyes—the second before they had turned away in trepidation.

"And Soren is honest," Mrs. Wicks declared. "Some of the racing sharps have tried to make Mr. Wicks

believe the boy hasn't tried to win once or twice; but I know better. They want to get him away from us. Once he didn't win with Viper when my husband had bet heavily and father was suspicious; but it was just the horse's nerves, I know. As my husband says, to-day Viper has got one of his ugly moods on. It's too bad! Father is firm with the boys; of course men who don't like him say he's harsh, but he isn't, just firm. He knows that a riding boy will do more for you if he likes you than if you gave him money, so he had me ask Billy to have dinner with us to-night. You know little things like that will make a boy try to win, don't you think?"

Delilah did think—many things; but she answered: "I should say with a boy like that you could have him with you; he's such a little gentleman."

"Oh, dear! now I must go," Mrs. Wicks said regretfully. "I must have lunch; then I'm going to the course. Are you going to the races, Mrs. Owen?"

"I may."

"I wish we could sit together there," the stout lady said hungrily. "It would be nice if Viper did win to have somebody to say she was glad. We have a box in the Grand Stand. I suppose you go into the Club Enclosure," and her inoffensive eyes wandered over the slim figure that so evidently belonged amongst the well-gowned aristocrats.

"Yes," Delilah answered, "but I haven't been here long, and know very few people. I'd like very much to join you in your box."

"Thank you—that's nice; now I must go."

Delilah's eyes, holding an amused concentration, followed the broad receding back of her stout friend.

Her ready acceptance of the invitation had not been due entirely to the prospect of felicitous association with Mrs. Wicks; rather to a mental itching to assay Father Wick's intentions. She would like to thwart the foxy old tyrant whom she felt sure had told his wife a lie for fear she would convey stable information to her. Probably by the time the fourth race had come around Mrs. Wicks would know definitely.

The Owens drove to the course with Jack Andrews.

As they sped along Owen asked: "And how is Lady Gay, Uncle—will she turn the trick in that stake to-day?"

The Man from the Desert pressed his toe on the gas and the little car leapt forward.

"Notice that, son?" the patriarch queried. "Elizabeth Ford is feelin' right spry, ain't she? Well, that's jus' how the leetle mare feels to-day; she was jus' like that this morning in her gallop; an' when Lady Gay's like that you'll see that white face of hers comin' up the stretch an' no hawse lookin' her in the eye."

"Do you know a horse named Viper, Mr. Andrews?" Delilah asked.

"Yes, missis; I know that crazy head; if he could talk he's give you a pipe-dream every time he opened his mouth. Some say he's a dope hawse, 'cause he's an in-an'-outer, but he ain't; he's jus' a nut that when he takes it inter his darn head to run—can beat many a hawse."

"I was sitting with Mrs. Wicks," Delilah continued, "and she told me her husband wasn't backing him to-day."

This simple statement almost brought Elizabeth Ford to a stand-still. It had given the patriarch a little chill of apprehension which reacted on his engineering.

"Then Wicks thinks he can win," the patriarch declared emphatically. "That ol' pirate is so dang crooked that he loads Tubby Wicks up with wrong tips to spread around. I know the old cuss. I ain't no man of prayer myself, but if I was as dang crooked as Wicks is I'd go inter safe crackin'."

"But what's the difference, Uncle," Owen interjected—"you don't think Viper can beat the little mare, do you?"

"He never see the day he could beat her for three-quarters of a mile; but Wicks, if he had a killin' on, he'd jus' tell a couple o' the other jocks they could dip in if they'd rough ride the one he had to beat—which is Lady Gay."

"Uncle, why don't you draw cards with him—get a little help yourself in the race?" Owen suggested.

"There ain't nothin' in crooked racin', son—I've raced hawses long enough to find that out; besides, if the two of us got fightin' some outsider'd spill the beans. No, straight racin' with the bes' hawse to win—that's the way."

Stewart's elbow bored into Delilah's ribs, and a happy grin of complete enjoyment at the patriarch's verbal morality displayed the even, white teeth.

"You're all right, Uncle," he commented: "we'll back an honest little mare to-day an' let the crooks run for Sweeny."

"Yessir—jus' like that."

Andrews let his two passengers out at the Club gate, and swung his car around to park it in the enclosure.

When they entered Delilah said: "Walk about with me on the lawn, Stewart, till I locate Mrs. Wicks in her box. She has invited us to sit with her."

"Good Lord!" Owen objected; "I've come down here for the fun of the thing."

"So have I, Stewart—for the fun of winning, and as Daddy Wicks put himself out to deceive me, I would consider it a scream to outwit him."

"Say, girl," and Stewart gazed at Delilah, a perplexed frown on his face, "you ought to be in the minin' game."

"I am. I've heard nothing else for two years but gold ore, rock formations, and stock flotations; this new game has some life to it."

"Well, go to it."

They had passed through the entrance leading from the Club Lawn, and Delilah, looking up toward the tier of boxes exclaimed: "There's Mrs. Wicks in No. 11. Are you coming up? I'm sure you'll like Mr. Wicks, if he appears," she added guilelessly.

"Like to murder him, from what old Jack Andrews says."

The florid lady was delighted when Delilah joined her; she said so three times.

Owen, ever restless, a D'Artagnan in the pursuit of adventure, pilgrimaged back and forth through Club Lawn to paddock, and back to the assailment of the Iron Men for the first two races.

It was after the third race that Delilah drew Stewart's attention to the silk cord dangling from his buttonhole from which the Club disc of admission had disappeared.

"Darn it!" he exclaimed; "I lost it tearing my way through the mob at the bettin' machines. Now I can't get out to the paddock through the Lawn gate. I know the secretary—I can get another one."

A sombre-faced guardian of the sacred Club Lawn reluctantly let him through to see the secretary.

Inside the office an assistant told Owen that the secretary was out but would be in in a minute.

Owen tilted a chair back against the wall beside an open window to wait, for without his passport his freedom was curtailed. Suddenly he turned his ear toward the open window. A rasping voice had filtered through the casement, saying: "I want you to work this commission, Dave. Here's a thousand—Wick's jack; string it along in dif'rent machines so the smooth sharks won't catch on. They know I'm Wick's bettin' commissioner, and if they see me put this jack down they'd know it was stable money—they'd swamp the odds, wouldn't they?"

"They sure would, Taffy."

"And I'd lose my job. The old man's put everybody away on this good thing—told 'em Viper had one of his ugly streaks."

"How'll I place it?" Dave asked.

"To win—all on the nose; 'cause Viper can't lose with Soren in the saddle."

At that moment the secretary came bustling into his office, and when Owen explained what had happened, handed him another Club badge, telling his assistant to tell the gate keepers to take up the lost badge carrying Mr. Owen's name, if presented.

Owen swung out, and passed into the paddock, a barrage of conflicting decisions sweeping his mind. The recent happening had been like an ordained hunch: losing his badge, which seemed bad luck, had led him to that window through which had filtered reliable information, the money talk, that would have influenced

nine out of every ten betters. He was in possession of secret information; on the other hand, Jack Andrews was positive Lady Gay could win; and he had come to the races with the intention of backing Lady Gay.

He found Jack Andrews leaning on the rail that enclosed the little circle around which the horses engaged in the Speed Stake were being led by stable boys. He touched the patriarch on the arm, and together they moved round to the far side of the circle, where they were alone.

Owen related what he had overheard, adding: I've got a queer feeling that there's somethin' up; this is so like a direct hunch."

"Gettin' cold feet, son?" the patriarch queried drily.

"I don't think with my feet, uncle," Owen answered, the faintest flavor of acidity in his tone. "I met a lot of fellows rushin' in there to plank their money down, beatin' their feet hot in the goin' an' there wasn't any of 'em wearin' rocks any one of which'd buy a good horse, but I'm wearin' 'em. When I dip into a mine deal, Mr. Andrews, I mos' gener'ly take the opinion of an engineer that ain't got an interest in the mine; an' jus' now I've got to decide who's the best guesser. You think Wicks can't win, an' he thinks you can't."

"Well, don't get hot 'bout it—either one of us don't know for sure. But when you see that leetle mare—see her, son? There she is."

And the patriarch pointed a long finger to a short, compact, broad-quartered mare whose full-boned limbs were as clean as a whistle—not a blemish on them. She walked like a queen, planting her full round hoofs firmly in the soft earth, the fetlocks nimble as the ankles of a dancing girl. Her large full eyes set in a broad

forehead were possessed of a restful intelligence; her thin tapering ears were pricked as if she were eager for the free gallop that she sensed was awaiting. Sometimes she turned her head and pushed her soft muzzle playfully against the shoulder of the man who led her by a bridle-rein.

"She ain't too much to look at, Mr. Owen," the patriarch resumed; "she's what I call my fat leetle hawse; an' 'cause she's small, folks don't cotton to her; but she's all hawse. I know Wicks thought he was stealin' this race when he put Viper in at a cheap price to get weight off his back, 104 lbs., but a hawse that'll quit once'll quit agen; an' the leetle mare'll break his sof' heart, 'cause she ain't never done runnin'—she don't never quit. There's the other one, Viper," the patriarch added: "he's runnin' his race right there in that leetle paddock—he's more like a dancin' master 'n a race hawse. If the starter keeps 'em five minutes at the barrier he'll run las'."

Owen shifted his eye from Lady Gay to the blood bay Andrews had indicated. To him the bay looked a veritable racing machine. He was fully sixteen hands high, and though of great length, was short coupled on the back; the long, high wither and the forward-reaching quarters meeting the full set of ribs till there seemed not much more than saddle room. And beneath the blood-red silk coat, that was like polished bronze, the veins mapped it in myriad rivulets. The coronet of each forefoot was white, and as Viper pranced and his nimble feet curled upward they flashed in the sunlight like the white wings of a bird. But the restless head, the teeth clamping irritably at the loose bit, the ears now pricked forward and then laid almost flat back

beside the crest, bore testimony to what Andrews had said of the horse's nervous temperament. Sometimes he even snapped half angrily at the man who led him. Once he wheeled with the quickness of a cat, and lashed out with both hind feet almost reaching the ring of spectators who stood against the rail.

Somehow to Owen Viper seemed to outclass the matronly looking little Lady Gay, and he knew that while Andrews wasn't a joyous optimist yet the old man was inclined to think his geese at least half-brothers to swans.

"You don't mind, Uncle," Owen said, "if I jus' stand down this race—don't bet at all. To-morrow'll be another day."

"You're the doctor—if the leetle mare stopped to scratch her leg or somethin' in the stretch, or Kelly fell off her back, you'd feel that I'd done wrong in gettin' you to bet. I got to go now, 'cause here comes Kelly."

The old man turned on his heel and stalked away with the dignity of a Roman Emperor; and like a segment of a rainbow, a procession of gaudy jockeys and their valets carrying the "tack"—saddles, weight-cloths and whips, came down the steps of the jockey room.

Owen lifted his Stet hat, scratched his wavy black hair, and chuckled: "The old gent's hot under the collar; but I'm going to take his advice and sit it out. I guess ol' Wicks'll come dang near puttin' it over Andrews this time. I'll jus' lay myself a thousand bucks that neither one of 'em knows who's goin' to win.

Quite cheered by the feeling that he was a hero of renunciation in letting a race go by without investing, Owen wound up the stair of the Grand Stand to the box where Delilah sat.

"Mrs. Wicks has gone down to speak to her husband," Delilah explained.

"She's gone to bet on Viper," Stewart declared, and he told his wife what he had heard.

"That old rascal hasn't told her, I'm sure," Delilah defended; "she still says that he's not betting at all. What are you going to do about it, Tootie?"

"I'm goin' to sit right here an' not bet a bean. I hope ol' Andrews beats him out, but I don't think the mare can turn the trick."

"I'm going down to put a small bet on Viper," Delilah declared.

"Go to it, girl; go in to the Club bettin'-room—less jam. I'd take it for you, but if I did I'd bet also, 'n I don't want to. I've got a hunch some outsider'll win this, because they're both so dang crooked."

Mrs. Wicks appeared, the stair-climbing exertion increasing the floridity of her fat face; and with her came Wicks, on his face a frown.

"Father won't let me bet on Viper, Mr. Owen," and the stout lady pouted.

Looking up quickly Stewart saw the little, avaricious gray eyes of Wicks appraising the size and brilliancy of his diamonds. As nimble-witted as Delilah, a sudden inspiration worded itself in his mind: "That's the idea of fooling the old lady; this old salamander, judging from my front, takes me for a plunging gambler, an' he's afraid I'll split his odds. No chance! Let him an' Jack Andrews fight it out."

Wicks slumped on to a chair, disjointedly, disgruntledly, saying: "I ain't bettin' myself. I'm just going to sit here and let the hoss run loose—run for the purse—it's pretty good."

"Some liar!" Owen commented inwardly.

Then Delilah came lightly up the steps, beamed on the old lady, and said: "I've put a little bet on Viper, Mrs. Wicks, just to bring you good luck."

"Hope you win it, lady!" Wicks' benefaction was a growl.

Like a man who puts the bottle away from him reluctantly, a hankering in his soul for a taste, Owen now veered to a desire to bet. The grouchy Wicks had angered him; he had a sudden impulse to back Lady Gay—to play against this objectionable pirate; to put his mental static in the scales against this very dislikable man.

"I think, Delilah," he said, "I'll see that the Owen family breaks even on this. If you'd waited over your bet to ask Mr. Wicks you wouldn't 've backed Viper; he has just told us, quite frankly, that he doesn't fancy his horse—hasn't backed him." Owen's toe tapped a chuckle on Delilah's slim ankle. "I'm goin' down to put a bet on Lady Gay," he added, as he rose and headed for the steps, a fear in his mind that he might be too late, that the machines would be closed.

He skidded down the crowded stair till he was brought to a sudden halt by the round bullet head of an up-going wayfarer catching him dead in the midriff. The climber was also startled by the impact, and when he raised the bullet head Stewart saw, set in a very black face, two white-margined eyes that were tangented as if A and Z were trying to see the middle letter of the alphabet. This was worse than having his breath knocked out, and Stewart muttered: "Great smoke! a cross-eyed nigger, an' me goin' to bet on Lady Gay! Nothin' doin'!"

He whirled as if his assailant had been the Father of all Evil, and raced back to his seat. He tipped his head toward Delilah, and whispered in her ear. "I met a cross-eyed coon, an' I've stacked up against enough bad luck to-day!"

The horses, an even dozen, were now emerging from the paddock to the course. They passed the stand in parade, wheeled, and, like a flock of sporting pigeons, went teetering over to the chute at the far side of the course, for it was a three-quarter mile dash. Some were walking sedately as though they were bored, the jockeys standing high in the stirrups to ease the weight on their mounts, their little, boy-faces almost touching the graceful tapered ears of the noble creatures they rode.

Viper, his blood-red coat glistening in the yellow sunlight, was cantering, his head down, and teeth champing the restraining bit, the white coronets of his forefeet flicking the air. Lady Gay was plodding along behind the others as if she knew it would be no race without her—that the starter would wait.

"Isn't Viper a beautiful horse?" Mrs. Wicks, in her pride of ownership, asked the soft autumn air.

"He looks good to me," Owen answered, a tinge of regret that he had not backed him.

"He's a dear!" Delilah contributed, with a feeling of satisfaction patting her handbag in which nestled, not, as she had said, a "small bet," but ten twenty-dollar tickets.

Getting away well in a sprint of three-quarters means a great deal, especially in a big field of twelve horses. There is no time to wait in the race until leaders, lacking stamina, pull out to let something else through. Every jockey when he had received his instructions in the

saddling paddock had been told: "Get away well, this horse is a good breaker; make every post a winning post, but if you're in the lead don't forget that it's three-quarters, so save a little for the run home."

So they were all anxious for a good break. The boy on the inside berth, next the rail, knew that if he hung at the start he'd be pinched off and would never get through; those in the middle would have the outside horses closing in to take the shorter circuit, and cut them off; and the outside jocks knew that a horse would have to be pounds better to run around the others on the bigger outside circumference and win.

Because of this, the striving of the boys to beat the barrier, there was the presentation of a heap of autumn-tinted leaves being swirled by the wind. The steeds were never still; excepting one; Lady Gay, in third position, stood as if waiting for a feed of oats, and the white blotch on her dark brown forehead showing close above the barrier.

Viper was a prime offender in this disruption of order. Time and again he whirled; once he reared, almost unseating Soren—a poorer rider would have been out of the saddle. Viper was in the middle of the scrimmage—No. 6; a bad place for a nervous horse. Twice some one sitting in the stand had gasped, as the horses lined up in seeming order: "Now—let them go!" But before the exclainer's voice had stilled there was again shatterment.

The people in the stand, tortured by the nervous watching, were as though they too were at the barrier striving for an advantage. Some lifted hands spasmodically as if to urge a flying steed; and when the starter, his patience exhausted, ordered the twelve to

break away, bellowing: "Go back! go back, and walk your horses up to the gate!" sighs of letting down of the nerves were heard here and there.

Wicks had sat a gloomy silent figure; the glasses held in his huge hands protruding from his face gave him the appearance of a sardonic gargoyle. Once he growled: "It's that assistant starter with the bull whip that's got Viper crazy. He'd like to see my hoss beat. I ain't never handed him a piece of money—that's what's the matter with him!"

Now the twelve, the wavering line of green and white and blue and red, moved stealthily up to the webbing stretched across the track. As if a giant's whip lash had smitten across the troupe they sprang to the race as the webbing shot up. Viper was caught just as the start of one of his whirls, and now, pocketed between two converging lines, was squeezed back. The little mare, Lady Gay, was showing her brown muzzle out in front. She was like a gentle smooth-running motor.

A gasp from the stout lady caused Owen to turn his head. "Did you see that—Viper all but left? The jockey must 've been asleep on him. And that starter! What did he let them go for—why did he spring the barrier when Viper was turning?" There was a sob in her voice; she was rolling her programme into a cigarette, her fat fingers working at it with nervous tenseness.

"A rotten start!" Owen contributed. "Too bad!"

A hollow groan—it might have been a deep curse, rumbled from beneath the glasses Wicks held glued to his eyes.

Down the back stretch the striving steeds raced, and

back, always dropping back, fluttered the light blue jacket atop Viper.

A length in the lead the little brown mare raced with the smoothness of a gull skimming quiet waters; and behind her sometimes a red jacket, sometimes a black, sometimes an orange, as the jockeys fought for a place behind that little marvel of speed.

Somebody behind the box cried: "Gad! it's a pace. If Lady Gay doesn't crack she's got them beaten off. Nothing can live that pace that ain't got a heart!"

A pudgy hand gripped Owen's arm, and a high soprano voice almost screamed: "Look! look! there he goes! Come on you, Viper!"

For across the track Soren on the outside was running by the other horses; picking up and dropping them one by one. He had raced into fourth place, and Mrs. Wicks was singing a song of hope, droning it like the thump of a tom-tom. "He'll win! he'll win! Ride him, boy! Come on, you good old horse!"

Wicks lowered his glasses for a second to blink the strain out of his pin-eyes, saying: "If Soren don't get pinched off again, if he ain't tryin' to throw this race, my hoss 'll come home by himself."

Round the bottom turn the blood-red head was lapped on the flank of the second horse, and the white star in Viper's forehead rose and fell like a beacon of hope.

Two horses galloping at the heels of the second, next the rail, were thrusting forward for the last turn. They gained; and at the turn there was a scrimmage. It was a scramble of horses; nothing definite, but that brown head with the white blotch showing clear against the

rail, and the little mare still gliding with that easy gallop that ate up the course.

"Where's Viper—where's Viper?" the fat woman gasped; "what's happened?"

"Soren 'took' him!" Wicks growled. "He could 've lapped Lady Gay on the outside and 've won it. Viper can outrun any of 'em hosses." There was dejection in the sombre voice.

All up the stretch the brown head nodded in front. It was a continuous hum of, "Lady Gay's got it! The little mare wins! The favorite's beat!"

Once, seemingly tearing himself loose from clinging horses, the bay crept up again, and somebody cried: "There comes Viper! It's all over!"

But presently it was all over. Lady Gay had won; and Viper, seeming to have tired, had fallen away, finishing back, eighth.

Mrs. Wicks, who had scrambled to her feet when she searched for Viper at the lower turn, sank to her seat with a gasping cry that caused Owen to turn startled eyes on her face. It was a pasty, greenish-white. One hand rested over her heart; the reaction, the despair, had almost stopped that fat-clogged organ.

Delilah had one of the plump hands and was chafing the palm, saying in her soft voice: "The heat is terrific; it's too much for you, Mrs. Wicks. Just sit still."

Gradually color rouged the pallor away, and Mrs. Wicks, with little sighs of relief, said, "My heart's weak; and to see Viper beat because of a bad ride was too much for me."

"It was a bad ride, and then some!" Wicks said, disagreeably. "I guess I know the crook that made it worth while for Soren to let Lady Gay win."

He turned his eyes, that were like the yellow eyes of a cat, on Mrs. Wicks. "And that's the last time *your* pet rides for me, mother. I ain't got no use for a sissy jock at any time. I'll tell him somethin' when he comes off the course. He pulled my hoss twice into a bunch, and I'll be lucky if the hoss wasn't cut down."

"I want to go home soon, Jim—I don't feel too chipper," the old lady declared pathetically.

"Guess I've got the same notion, Mary," Wicks answered. "Soon's I've seen how Viper cools out I'll come for you. Like as not I'll find him all stiffened up when he's cold; p'raps he got jumped on. Perhaps that little crook has cost me a six-thousand dollar hoss!"

At this a glint of malicious humor took possession of Stewart. He held out his hand, saying, "Well, thank you, Mr. Wicks, for the tip that you weren't bettin' on Viper; it switched me to Lady Gay, and you were right."

When Wicks had departed, his face scowling in gloom, Mrs. Wicks said, apologetically: "Father shouldn't blame me for putting Soren up—I hadn't anything to do with it. Viper's a hard horse to ride—he's so eager and high-strung; that's why he put Soren up instead of our own boy, because Soren's supposed to be a strong rider. How'd I know the boy was crooked?"

Delilah patted the disconsolate woman's pudgy hand, comforting, "He can't blame you, dear—he doesn't; don't worry about it—it's just racing luck."

When Mrs. Wicks had departed with the irate partner of her joys and sorrows, Stewart worded his disgust. "Of all the short sports I ever stacked up against—the pair of 'em. Squealers—bad losers! 'Kiss me, Billy,' when the boy was goin' out—'little angel face'; an' when he comes back sandbag him because

he couldn't land that crazy-headed skate down in front. Viper couldn't 've won with a postage stamp on his back. Old Andrews had the right dope—said Lady Gay could beat him—an' she did; never was headed; jus' came down that stretch like a milkmaid bringin' home a pail of milk."

"Yes, I wouldn't want to live with Wicks; he's a bear." Delilah replied. "His anger was because he's lost money. But it was different with Mrs. Wicks, Tootie; I'm sorry for her. She just idolizes the horse because he was like a baby to her. She told me they hadn't any children, and she's practically got no husband outside of paying bills."

"An' every bill paid means a grouch."

"I guess so. And a woman always is craving for something to mother, don't you see. And that colt to her comes first, just like a mother with her son; no matter what the boy does a mother is ready to protect him."

"But she shouldn't slam Soren. Viper couldn't win—I knew it. They didn't get this on Viper," and Owen held a big roll of bills in his hand.

"I lost two hundred dollars," Delilah said in a cold voice.

"Two-hundred—say, you're a plunger! Why didn't you sit it out like I did and not bet?"

"Because I didn't meet a cross-eyed darkey. I don't reason as fine as you do, Tootie."

At twenty minutes to eight that same evening Delilah was in the little reception room of the hotel waiting for Stewart. They had not dined yet. This was one of that young man's delightful vagaries; their

life was like at an ordinary restaurant—meals at all hours.

As she sat there Jockey Soren came into the room, evidently searching for some one. At sight of Delilah his face lighted up, and he came forward, hat in hand, and said diffidently: "Good evening, Mrs. Owen." He was like a schoolboy. "I'm just casting about for Mrs. Wicks. I was to have dinner with them. I was to meet her here at quarter to eight; guess I'm a little early."

With a graceful sweep of her hand Delilah turned a wave in the bronze-gold of her skirt to clear a space for the boy on the lounge beside her.

"Sit down, Mr. Soren," she said.

The little man slipped into the seat extenuating his desire: "S'pose I might as well; she'll come here to look for me."

Delilah's beautifully arched black eyebrows drew down into a puckered line. She knew just what had happened. It was a delicate situation, that is, to break it to the boy; but evidently there was no solution but the brutal truth.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wicks have dined, Mr. Soren," she said, turning her placid eyes on him. "I saw them coming out of the dining room ten minutes ago."

If Delilah had expected this blow to crush the boy, and make him weep, she received a cheering surprise. A chuckle bubbled from his lips, and the full eyes, so like a girl's, became happy.

"That's all right then," he declared in a relieved voice; "that lets me out. You know, Mrs. Owen . . ." he hesitated, and looked at Delilah as a schoolboy might have looked at the teacher when he made a bad break in school.

"Yes, I know. Go on."

"I came up for dinner because of Mrs. Wicks," he adventured. "She's been nice to me. There was something . . ."

"I know all about it," Delilah interrupted; "don't worry."

"You know—about—Wicks, and what he thought about my ride to-day?" and the boy's eyes, large in the fullness of this, remained fearlessly fixed on Delilah's face.

"Yes, I was up in the box with them during the race, and I heard it all. And if I'd been a man I think I'd have dumped old Wicks over the rail. It's very manly of you to come up to respond to the old lady's invitation after it all."

"Well, it was kind of like ridin' a rough horse—I mean," he corrected, "to face Daddy Wicks at the table; but I'd promised and I hadn't heard from her. The old man bet heavy on Viper and I guess that kind of got his goat."

"I bet on him too," Delilah declared.

"Much?"

"Two hundred dollars."

Soren gave a whistle of astonishment. "Too bad, Mrs. Owen; I lost you that money; I put up a rotten ride."

"It was the horse, not you," Delilah contended.

"No; the fault was entirely between the starter and me—the horse tried his best."

"But it doesn't matter; I don't mind. I'll prove it. My husband will be here directly, and you come and have dinner with us."

The boy's eyes widened with a light of appreciation. It was almost a sigh of resignation when he said, "No,

thank you; I'm going down to the restaurant and eat all alone. I ought to be locked up in a box stall with a biscuit and a glass of water for the ride I put up to-day. I'm a dub."

But Delilah shook her head negatively.

"I am—" he persisted. "But that two hundred dollars you lost—Wicks is startin' Viper day after to-morrow in a mile race, and you have a good bet on him, Mrs. Owen."

In his earnestness the boy had enlarged the volume of his voice. He looked around the room cautiously, and then lowering it continued: "Viper is at his best now. I worked him a mile two days ago in 1.41 and he was just breezin'. If there's a good jockey on his back in that race, you bet all you can afford to lose on him, Mrs. Owen—he'll win."

"A good jockey—you?"

There was a touch of bitterness in the boy's voice as he answered: "No, Wicks has got second call on me and he swears he'll keep me on the ground; he won't put me up. If he puts up Bud Jones don't touch the race—don't touch it. He's going to put Jones up to lose that race to get a long price the next time out."

"But if you couldn't win on him to-day, why some other jockey—how can another jockey win on Viper?"

The lad rubbed his slim little hands together nervously, he adjusted his tie, he coughed, he stole a furtive glance at Delilah, twice; then as if diving he said; "Mrs. Owen, do you mind if I say I like you?"

"I think it's lovely of you to say that."

"You know," he added with short, quick, apologetic words, "I don't shoot craps with the boys; I don't seem to do anything but ride horses; and I get kind of starved

for somebody to talk to. I guess that's because I was always with my mother till I went to the horses."

Delilah touched Soren's arm with the tips of her slim fingers. "And I like you because you're different."

"That's why the other boys don't like me. But listen. I'm going to tell you something so that you will bet on Viper when he starts—I'm going to tell you why he lost that race to-day. But you must promise not to tell Mrs. Wicks because she'll tell him."

"And you don't want Mr. Wicks to know?"

"No. He didn't ask me what had happened; he called me a thief, and said Jack Andrews had bought me up to throw the race. I never pulled a horse in my life, and I won't."

"I won't tell Mrs. Wicks," Delilah promised.

The boy tipped his shoulders forward, and almost whispering said: "Just at the start my mount wheeled, and Riley on White Sox crashed into me, tearing a stirrup away. I thought my leg was crushed, and I believe I fainted for about five seconds, for when I woke up I was trailing the bunch and riding on one stirrup. I pretty near cried. Did you see Viper on the back stretch pull out and try to run around his horses?"

"I saw it," Delilah confirmed.

"He did that himself, 'cause he's clever and game. If I could just have sat down, he'd have won; but they bumped me, and having only one stirrup I staggered him keeping in the saddle. Viper tried again in the stretch, but I couldn't help him, and he was tired."

"And you don't want Wicks to know this?"

"He called me a thief, and worse—I won't tell him. I've told you because you lost on my bad ride. A jockey isn't much that can't keep his stirrups."

"But you could win on Viper if he would give you the mount?"

"I could; but he won't, and I won't ask him. And I won't tell him about the stirrup. If I were as big as he is I'd beat him up; he's a coward to abuse a boy my size—a coward! He's a tyrant. I've heard him speak to Mrs. Wicks when I'd like to have taken a club to him!"

Then Stewart Owen breezed into the reception room, a nimble excuse on his lips for having kept Delilah waiting.

And Soren, slipping back into his diminutive boyishness, escaped.

All through their dinner Delilah was abstracted. Stewart's gabble about mines, even a suit of clothes he had ordered, were floaty things; in front of them galloped a horse with a boy on his back that had lost a stirrup.

It was the disintegrated something that she would like to reconcrete. If Soren could ride Viper in the next race, and the objectionable Wicks not benefit—that would be something for her to essay.

When Stewart asked, "What's the matter, girl?" Delilah answered, "Nothing!"

The next day was an off day so far as Delilah's new form of enjoyment, racing, was concerned. Owen's time was taken up with his suit over the Shining Tree mine; he had to appear for examination for discovery.

Delilah was rather glad to have a loose day free from distraction, to devote to the task of righting Jockey Soren, filtering ashes into the bristling hair of the surly Wicks, and, incidentally, more than recouping herself for the loss of two hundred on Viper. She confided in

nobody; discussed the matter with nobody; but by the time she went to the Grapevine with Owen and Andrews, on Friday, she had something very definite worked out.

They were sitting on a bench in the sunlight when Delilah said: "You are quite friendly with Judge Frank, aren't you, Tootie? I saw you talking to him as he came down out of the Judges' Stand after the first race on his way to the Secretary's office."

"Sure! Judge Frank is a real man; he's the kind you would see me talking to."

"His face reads like that; I'd like to know him."

"He's married, girl."

"So am I. After the next race you catch him when he comes down and introduce him to me. I went to school with his mother."

"Say, girl, what 're you givin' me," and Owen grinned.

"Perhaps I'll give it to you afterwards, Stewart; do as I ask you."

Wondering what Delilah had in that clever head of hers Stewart humored her, and had the grace just after he had introduced Judge Frank to take himself off to the paddock with the excuse that he was after a tip.

Delilah was wise enough to know that Judge Frank, on a busy racing day, had little time to waste, so asking him to sit down beside her for one full minute she drove straight at the matter in hand. She told him about the lost stirrup, the vile abuse Wicks had heaped on Soren, his avowed intention of keeping the boy on the ground, and that he meant to put Bud Jones up on Viper in the race that day for the purpose of getting him beaten again to make a killing with him later.

"That's extraordinary," Judge Frank commented. "If I hadn't known that Soren was an honest boy I'd have had him up before the stewards to explain that ride; it was a bad one. I was afraid old Wicks was corrupting the lad. I was just waiting for Viper's next race to get that old cuss on the carpet. He has named Bud Jones as the jockey to-day, and I know that Jones can't get his best out of Viper; no apprentice boy could—he's a hard horse to ride. I'm glad you told me this. We want to keep this game as clean as we can. I guess, Mrs. Owen, that knowing what I do now, Viper's race to-day will be up to the horse."

"I like the boy," Delilah said, with a fair amount of disinterestedness, because she did; "he's a modest little chap, and wasn't going to say anything about this unless the stewards questioned him. He feels that Wicks, having treated him so badly, has no right to know."

"I must go now," Judge Frank said, rising and lifting his hat. "Thank you for telling me this."

A delightful smile on Delilah's lips suffused Judge Frank pleasantly. And when he had gone she had a mild exhilaration, a feeling that she had done something for both Soren and herself. She had an intuitive feeling, not over definite, of course, that perhaps Soren would ride Viper; at least Mr. Wicks, who had acted so selfishly toward her by lying about his horse, would get some sort of a surprise. She liked to retaliate in kind.

Before the next race, the third, Stewart came back to where Delilah sat, but she, immersed in the pleasure of anticipation with its little mysterious atmosphere of what would happen, was so unresponsive to his comments on people and horses that he asked, "What 're you cross about, girl—what 've I done now? That

lady I was talkin' to over on the lawn is the wife of Gordon, who is handlin' that Shinin' Tree deal."

"Tootie, you'll never offend me by talking to any woman as badly dressed as she is—you were quite safe."

"What is it then—there's something?"

"There is, it's horses."

"Say, Lilah, you've got the racin' bug—you're stung worse than anybody I ever knew."

"You never did know yourself, Tootie."

"Well, you make up for it. But what's the idea?"

"Viper."

"That skate!"

"Soren said he could win to-day."

Stewart laughed. "I've already got touted on to three different horses in that race; and you're listenin' to a pinhead jock that put up the worst ride on Viper that I ever saw. What does any jockey know about a horse's chances? Nothin'! anybody'll tell you that. I'm goin' to back Timothy in that race, 'cause Jack Andrews says he beat Lady Gay once, and is a good horse."

"Soren knows why Viper will win," Delilah said ambiguously.

"Got somethin' up his sleeve, eh?" Owen sneered. "If he knows anythin' why didn't he let it out. I s'pose he blinked his owl-eyes, looked wise, an' whispered that it was a boat race—that Wicks had got all the other horses dead to Viper. Gad! I know that sort of stuff. A tout'll pull a fellow to one side an' whisper—he'd whisper if he was in the middle of the Mohave Desert—he'll whisper: 'Never mind if this horse ain't won a race in thirty starts, he's goin' to win to-day; I know somethin'.'"

"Tootie, your talk distracts me. Just take a walk up and down the lawn and give the pretty girls the once-over. If you'll keep still and wait I think you'll get a little surprise."

The Man from the Desert joined Delilah and Stewart to watch the running of the third race. When it was over he still sat on; he was like a fish out of water having no horse running that day. This emptiness of life deepened his saturnine gloom.

"What d'you think, Uncle," Stewart said, "Mrs. Owen is going to back Viper again in this race."

"Well," and the patriarch lifted the big slouch hat from his gray locks as if in reproof of such a useless waste of good money, "you see him run two days ago, an' if some of the boys hadn't pulled up he'd 've been last. He had a good boy on him that day, Soren; an' I see down on the board in the bettin' ring Bud Jones give as the rider to-day. Bud Jones couldn't ride Man o' War an' beat a sellin' plater."

"By heck!" And Andrews stood up, unslung his glasses and focused them on the Judges' Stand. Then he sat down, saying, with a tang of jubilation in his voice: "They've got that ol' crook, Wicks, up afore the stewards. I wonder what it's all about? I hope he gets his—he orter be put off!"

Over in the official stand Judge Frank was saying: "Mr. Wicks, we didn't like Viper's race Wednesday. The public comes here to see a race, not a funeral; we don't want any dead horses; and Viper ran like a cheap selling-plater."

"I lost heavy on him, sir," Wicks answered.

"I wasn't speaking about the betting," Judge Frank

retorted curtly; "I don't know anything about betting; it only comes in sometimes as evidence of a man's intention. You've got Viper in to-day with your own boy on his back, and we all know he won't try a yard for Bud Jones; you know it too."

"I had to put him up; I couldn't get another good jock could make the weight except Soren, and after the race he give Viper last time I don't want him never no more."

Judge Frank stepped to one side and held a low-toned conversation with two stewards. Then he returned to where Wicks was leaning against the rail, saying; "Mr. Wicks tell your trainer to turn the tack over to Soren—the stewards are putting him on Viper." He turned to an assistant. "You go over to the jockey room with Mr. Wicks, and tell the Clerk of the Scales to weigh out Soren for Viper."

"You'd better tell Soren how to ride my horse then, sir; he didn't obey orders the other day," Wicks said angrily. "I gave him instructions to get off in front and stay there."

"We'll attend to that matter, thank you. You tell your trainer of the change, that's all you've got to do," Judge Frank answered curtly.

It was because of this official interference that when the jockey board across the track rose solemnly into place, Jack Andrews, running his eye down the names exclaimed, "By heck!" Then he rubbed his eyes for a clearer vision, and repeated; "By heck! the stewards 've put Soren on Viper again. They've took Wick's own boy, Bud Jones, off, an' put up Soren. They've ketched on that ol' crook wasn't tryin' to-day; but danged if I know why they put Soren up."

Delilah, lowering her voice said, "I did that, Tootie; I told Judge Frank something."

"Great Scott! Next year you'll be one of the stewards: you *are* comin' on, girl!"

The patriarch scratched a gray-haired temple. "This is some kind of a trap for that dang ol' Wicks, an' I'm glad of it," he declared. "But I'm kinder feared Soren is between the devil an' the deep sea. If he wins—which he won't—they'll have him up there an' give him the third degree over the las' race. They don't want no scandals aired if they can help it. Racin' gets its bad name not 'cause of real hawsemen an' hawses but jus' 'cause of crooks, an' a big slice of the public thinks it's all crooks. I heered many a man say the judges must be blind not to see certain things that's done in a race; but they ain't blind—they wouldn't be there if they was; only they won't stir up the mud unless they've got to—mud-rakin' is kinder gone out of fashion."

"Soren didn't do anything crooked," Delilah contended.

"I guess he didn't," Andrews affirmed. "A bad-actor hawse 'll get mos' any boy in wrong—an in-an'-outer like Viper. But it'll all come out as to what was doin' after the race. 'Em stewards knows what they're doin'; there's somethin'."

"I'm going to bet on Viper, Tootie," Delilah declared.

"And I'm not," he asserted vigorously. "Wednesday I got the straight stable information an' then he didn't win."

She opened her handbag and passed four crisp fifty dollar notes to Owen, saying: "Tootie, put this on Soren's mount for me, like a dear."

Stewart eyed the money suspiciously; then he fished his roll from an inside pocket in his vest, and flicked the bills in a count. He looked at his wife and asked: "Who's money 's makin' this bet?"

"Ours," and Delilah gave him a ravishing smile.

"Mine," he corrected. "How much did you take?"

"I didn't take my half—only two hundred?"

"Gee!" He turned to Andrews with a grin: "Uncle, you've got the right dope; a helpmate means helpin' one's self."

"If you ask me, son, I'd say you'd best turn it all over to the missus—it'll last longer."

"Well," and Stewart drew his tall figure up, "I'll put it on for you, Lilah, but I'd rather blow it in on a good dinner; we'd have somethin' for it then. Here's where the house of Owen loses two hundred bucks, because a baby-faced kid has talked in his sleep."

While Stewart was down contributing to the Iron Men, Andrews drolled reminiscently: "If that hawse wins—which I'm feared he won't—you'll rake down 'bout two thousand dollars, Mrs. Owen. It's dang funny how women sometimes win a good bet when all the hawsemen lose their dough."

The horses were parading down to the barrier almost at the Judge's Stand when Stewart came racing back with Delilah's tickets.

As Viper passed in the parade, Judge Frank, leaning out over the track, beckoned the jockey with a finger. Speaking low, with his head down, the judge said: "Soren, we didn't like your ride on this horse the other day, and we want you to do better to-day. I'm your friend, and it would have looked bad if another boy happened to win, so we're giving you a chance. I think

Viper's a good horse, well ridden, and that's what we want. Go on now."

There were fewer horses in this race, seven. It was a mile and the jockeys had not the wild desire for the break that they had entertained in the three-quarter dash. Also there were fewer apprentice boys. All this gave Soren a better chance with the excitable Viper; also the horse was on the outside where he could indulge in his antics without working himself into the jamb.

Perhaps this sense of non-interference soothed the bay; he was better behaved; not quiet, but there was less whirling, less lashing out of his heels. Perhaps the starter felt that he had given Soren the worst of it in his Wednesday race, for, as Viper swung fair to the barrier, the gauzy web vanished, there was a clang, a roar of, "They're off!" Then the hammer of feet on boards as the people in the stand sprang to their feet, and the blood-bay, with one stinging snap at his flank from Soren's whip, his lean neck stretched in eagerness, raced like a devil of progression down the slant of the curved track, and at the first turn was a head in front of a chestnut that held the rail.

"Did you see that?" Andrews asked of nobody in particular; "that's Soren at hisself—that's the way Soren gets away when he's got any kind of a hawse under him. If that red skate's wuth two bits that boy 'll bring him home to-day."

Delilah's eyes blazed with the old red-amber light; her steel-like fingers were clutching at Stewart's arm. "I'm so glad for the boy's sake; now they can't say anything against him," she panted.

And after the first slash of his whip Soren had arched his slim body forward; he was like a butterfly

with gaudy blue wings that floated above the striving bay's neck.

"Soren's not movin' on him," Andrews commented in a rasping monotone; "Not movin' on him."

And the bay was creeping forward—his shoulders now showed in front; and then the saddle girths. Fifty yards and the high rakish quarters were clear, with the tail floating like a wisp of smoke at the chestnut's nose. Now edged close into the rail Viper galloped with a long swinging stride, as if at last the despised was coming into his own. At the turn a length of open showed between the bay and the chestnut, who was still second.

As they raced, showing flat against the lower end of the track, the chestnut had crept up till his head nodded at the bay's tail.

"Viper's quittin'? Uncle," Owen cried; "he's backin' up."

"No, he ain't!" the patriarch growled; "no he ain't. That's Soren. He's the bes' hawseman ever sat a hawse. He ain't moved on him; he ain't winked; he knows better 'n to race 'round 'em turns when it's not needed. 'Em pinheads behind is fightin' for a place—he ain't got to. He knows Viper's where he belongs, 'cause he's a front runner. He's took him back for a breather. Gad! what a boy he is! He'll swing inter that stretch on the rail—he won't lose an inch; an' Viper'll be freshened up for the run home. Gad! what a boy! If I had the papers on Soren I could win the Kentucky Derby with a mule."

"I guess we've been kiddin' ourselves, Uncle; I guess Viper's some horse after all," Owen said.

"The boy is!"

Up the stretch there was the blue jacket always in the lead; and they could see a small pale face humped over a blue shoulder watching that nothing crept up to steal the race.

"See that?" Andrews asked; "see that—see the boy? He knows he's got it won, an' he's jus' nursin' that skate; he's kiddin' the hawse that it's easy. A neck in front'll do that boy. One move, one jostle of the knees, an' that high-strung cuss 'd quit. Soren knows that. Jus' nursin' him home. Gad, what a boy!"

By half a length Viper won; and perhaps only sage old Andrews knew that he couldn't have won by a dozen lengths; the stand thought he had romped home.

Delilah, who had stood on the bench in her intensity, crumpled down in her seat, gasping. "Stewart, I'm so glad the boy showed them what he could do."

"Some heart, girlie!" Owen touched her cheek with his fingers. "I like the boy too; I like to see a fellow make good when they hammer him."

The three placed horses had now turned into the enclosure at the Judges' Stand. The other were being stripped of their saddles on the course. Then the ribbon of red and blue and green passed over the weighing scales.

Suddenly Andrews growled. "By heck! I was afeared of that!"

For climbing the steps to the Stewards' stand was the blue-jacketed figure of Soren.

"The stewards 've sent for the boy," the patriarch added. "Now the poor devil's goin' to be broiled."

"What can they do?" Delilah queried, a tremor of apprehension in her voice.

"'Taint this race," Andrews declared; "they want to know 'bout Wednesday's race. They can't take this

away from Viper; but that poor kid may get the gate 'cause of Wednesday's ride."

Others had seen the rider of the winner go up to the men of authority; the red sign bearing the magic word "Official" was not yet beneath the numbers of the placed horses, and a hush of expectancy fell upon the multitude. Below on the lawn men crowded about the Judges' Stand with upturned faces.

The feeling of dread in Jockey Soren's heart as he passed up the Bridge of Sighs was swept away when Judge Frank said, with his habitual kind smile: "Soren, the stewards didn't like your ride on Viper. Wednesday, but we know what happened. You rode a good race to-day, and you are exonerated."

VI.

Delilah Scores

AS Stewart Owen and Delilah whirled up the broad drive to Caven's bungalow in Jack Andrews' capable little car, Caven met them on the verandah.

The Man from the Desert's gray eyes, from under shaggy brows, busied themselves in an appraisal of Caven. Andrews knew his man at once—he had seen hundreds of him on the race tracks. Behind that genial, strong face, with its healthy florid skin, and the philanthropic blue-gray eyes, was tenacity, not over much scrupulousness, and a bulldog courage that would take any chance.

And Caven, as if this assay were all wrong, was whole-souled geniality.

"Welcome to The Abbey, Mrs. Owen; glad to see you," he was saying.

"Funny name for a livin' joint, Tom," and Owen grinned.

Caven indicated the black-lettered name over the stone doorway, "The Abbey of Theleme." "Highbrow stuff, Stewart—one of Gerry's tricks," and Caven laughed.

Delilah's black eyebrows drew into a tiny query mark. Highbrow stuff, and Gerry! For Owen had said

that Gerry was a stable boy when the name had cropped up in a phone message.

"It means," Tom was explaining, "'Do as you please,' so just make yourselves at home."

When they were seated in the big drawing-room, Caven said: "After that hot drive, what about us, Stewart?"

"I'll go you once," and Owen smiled in anticipation; Andrews drew a heavy hand across the gray jungle that hid his capacious mouth in pleased surprise.

Caven stepped to a door that, as it opened to the side verandah, threw in a shaft of warm sunlight, and called "Gerry! Mrs. and Mr. Owen are here, and we want a little refreshment."

A low musical ripple of laughter floated in through the door, and a hot flush swept over the dark face of Delilah. Gerry, the stable boy, dabbling in the classics, and with a cultured soprano voice!

The hot blood had rushed to Owen's face, also, for, over the phone, he had understood that Gerry would not be at home. He had tried to persuade his wife not to come out with them on this horse business, but Delilah was in the habit of having her own way—especially when Stewart's manner indicated that he had some hidden reason for his solicitude over her.

And Andrews, too, had wanted her with them as the horse business concerned her.

Then a vision appeared in the sunlight of the door. Delilah almost gasped, and Stewart felt his heart sink into his boots.

Gerry was undeniably a girl, a beautiful girl. A mass of hair, wind blown in the orchard, that must have been spun rubies caught and held shreds of gold from the

sunlight, and sparkled where drops of red wine had fallen upon it in some ambrosial shower. The small oval face, shadowed, was like the face of a sylph framed in a golden halo and to the lithe slender figure clung a gown of shimmering burnt-gold; beneath the slender straight ankles dainty feet rested firmly in bronze slippers.

Owen groaned inwardly, thinking of the aftermath with jealous wife; for he had expatiated largely upon his philanthropic endeavor to help out "poor Tom."

And Delilah, knowing Stewart's supreme weakness for a pretty face, set her firm white teeth. She was mentally sneering, "Poor Tom! So like Stewart to worry over any man's troubles."

Delilah was roused by Caven introducing the symphony in gold as his sister Geraldine.

The slim fingers of Gerry lingered in Delilah's firm hand, and the large soft brown eyes dwelt coaxingly on her face. "This is lovely, Mrs. Owen. I'm so glad you came; I didn't know you were coming."

Delilah's mental comment was, "I fancy not."

"It was an accident kept me at home to meet you," Gerry purred on. "I was to have gone for a picnic with my friends the Conways, who live down the drive, but the stupid chauffeur ran their car into a motor truck to-day and they phone that the picnic was off. I'm so glad now."

"Damn that chauffeur!" Owen growled.

To Delilah this was illuminating; for while Stewart had presented at first many plausible reasons why she should not go out to The Abbey, he had given in quite cheerfully later on; he had, no doubt, phoned out and found that Gerry had expected to be away, that was all. In fact Static had made a fine mess of it.

"Now, Gerry," Caven commanded, "these gentlemen would like a small sensation. How about a cocktail, Stewart?"

"A full-grown one," Owen grinned.

"You, Mrs. Owen?" Gerry pleaded, her voice like a caress.

"May I have milk? On a farm it will be the real thing."

"Certainly, dear. And you, Mr. Andrews?"

"Cocktails is kinder jinky for me," the patriarch said solemnly; "they're kinder too kittenish; a thimbleful of straight liquor—"

"That's the name of the place, Mr. Andrews, 'Do as you please,' " Caven commented.

As Gerry flitted out to the dining-room and back again with a tray of glasses, Delilah likened her to an orchid; yes, an orchid—orchids were parasites. She was a clinger—a gold-digger whose spade was a smile.

She pictured the past two or three weeks. Stewart had been running out to see Tom Caven over a mine deal that was to bring them a fortune; and the strong plea always was that he was anxious to put "poor Tom" on his feet, for Tom was up against it. And the magic of the help was to be that Caven had a race horse that, if Andrews would train him, could win enough money in one race to buy the Midas claim that was certain to prove a gold mine worth a million.

Owen had been full of it; it was the chance of a lifetime.

Now as Delilah realized just how a girl like Gerry would appeal to her susceptible husband, she more fully understood his enthusiasm over "poor Tom" and his prospects.

Owen was anxious to get the visit to The Abbey over. Gerry and Delilah together—in proximity, was like carrying dynamite over a rough road. There would be no explosion—not just now; he knew the subtle methods of wife too well to fear that, so he said:

“Tom, Mr. Andrews has come out to look the horse over, and give him a trial on your half-mile track. An’ I’ve got to get back to town soon’s I can.”

“Right you are,” Caven acquiesced. “We’ll go down to the stable, you can look the colt over, Mr. Andrews. I’ll have him saddled, and Mike—he’s a light boy—will give him a gallop.”

“Better come, Lilah,” Owen suggested. He turned to Caven. “You see, Tom, as I explained, this Shining Tree mine has got me tied up, but wife here has got some loose change, an’ she’s a racin’ bug.”

“May I go too?” Gerry pleaded.

Owen frowned, and shook his head; but Gerry’s eyes had been looking into Delilah’s, full of admiring friendliness. She missed Stewart’s pantomime, but Delilah didn’t.

“Of course you’re coming, Gerry—may I call you Gerry?” and Delilah’s arm went round the girl’s waist.

At the stable Caven and Andrews were in the stall going over the points of the colt. “Sweep Up is a three-year-old by Broomstick, out of Merry Maid,” Caven explained.

“None better’n Broomstick’s get, they can run an’ stay,” the patriarch commented; “an’ Merry Maid—I remember her—she was a good mare. She was out of Australian, a imported hawse, an’ that strain, called the Melbourne breed, can run all day. Merry Maid got one

or two good colts—don't know where they are now, broke down, I guess."

The colt, a rich brown, had poked his head over the closed lower-half of the door, and was snuggling at Delilah's shoulder.

She opened her handbag, saying to Gerry: "I've always got some lumps of sugar here to give my horse, Slipper Dance; I carry them so I won't forget it."

She held a cube in the palm of her slim, strong hand to the colt, and Sweep Up picked it off the palm with his silky upper lip daintily.

"Oh, you're just a baby," Delilah cried—"just a baby! You've got a pretty mouth." She stroked the soft muzzle, saying in a lowered voice to Gerry, "If he were a man I wouldn't trust him—with that weak jaw."

Then Sweep Up was saddled, and, as he was brought out, Stewart asked: "Comin', over to the course, Lilah, to see the colt gallop?"

"I can't go," Gerry pointed to her bronze slippers. "I'll get some tea ready."

"I'll stay with Gerry," Delilah declared.

"But you want to see the colt work?" Owen expostulated.

"No, I don't, Tootie; I'll leave that to Mr. Andrews; I'd rather chat with Gerry."

"You dear!" and the girl's hand rested on Delilah's arm affectionately, her dark, soft eyes full of appreciation.

"The devil!" Owen muttered as he strode away.

Gerry linked her arm in Delilah's saying, "We'll chef up a tea, and have a chat, dear. I'm glad you didn't go with the men. I get so lonesome here at The Abbey."

As they started there was a loud, raucous neigh, a shrill whinny from a stall lower down in the row, followed

by a thumping crash as if a horse belted the door with his hoofs. The lower door, being bolted, held, but the upper, lightly latched, swung open, and a brown head with distended nostrils and wide, eager eyes was thrust out, the horse's breast surging against the closed half-door.

Gerry, followed by Delilah, ran to the stall, the girl reproving the excited horse: "Duster, you bad boy—back up!"

As she pushed at the horse's head she turned a troubled face to Delilah: "He knows that Sweep Up has gone out; scent or something; they generally go out together."

Delilah was staring at the horse. It was as if by some necromancy Sweep Up had been magicked into the stall. She worded this: "Why, he's the image of the other colt!"

"Yes," Gerry admitted, "nobody could tell them apart except for that," she indicated a white mark, like a long slim arrowhead, on the fetlock joint of the colt's right foreleg.

"They must be brothers," Delilah declared.

"Yes, I believe they are. I think he's Sweep Up's four-year-old brother."

Delilah was stroking the brown forehead, running her hand down the bony nose. "Wait," she said to Gerry, "let me give him a lump of sugar; let's quiet him and then shut the door."

Duster fumbled the sugar in Delilah's palm so awkwardly that it rolled to the straw-covered floor.

"Clumsy," she reproved; "try again." This time, with a little pushing assistance from Delilah, the horse

retrieved the sweet. "There," she commented, "but you're not as clever as baby-mouth!"

And something of what she had said of the weak mouth on Sweep Up came back to her; the wider nostrils, the firmer mouth and jaw of Duster, caused her to say: "Gerry, I like this horse better than the other one; he's got a face firmer, more like a man who does things. Why doesn't your brother race him?" Delilah was sure she detected confusion in Gerry's hasty, "Oh, I don't know—there's something. Tom is going to keep him for breeding. I don't know much about the horses—I'm not interested much."

Gerry had closed the door, saying, "We must hurry back to The Abbey and get some tea ready."

At the bungalow the orchid flitted in and out, humming something soft, sensuous, the droon punctuated by the tinkle of silverware against shell china, the gold drape whispering about the slim, quick ankles with a suggestion of a zephyr ruffling apple blossoms.

Delilah, after the refusal of her tendered help, sat in a wicker chair watching the girl complacently; also, with a joy of endeavor in her active mind. Curiously she wasn't as bitter with Stewart as she had been in the Stella affair; she was a good sport, inherently, the Spanish or gypsy strain, whichever it was; and she had to admit that, given a man like Stewart, irresponsible, fond of immaterial things—diamonds, expensive ties, pretty women—that she could understand it in the case of Gerry.

And Gerry was deep. That clinging girlishness, rather cultivated, subdued gush, was the joker in the pack.

Delilah etched the whole thing as she sat there.

Stewart, deeply interested in a man's welfare—poor Tom!—had been the improbability that had roused her suspicions at first.

And Caven, totally void of finer sensibilities, would view with satisfaction the enmeshing of his friend, Owen, in the tendrils of the orchid.

Long before the men returned from the trial, Delilah had determined that Sweep Up should be taken into the patriarch's barn; this would mean that she would be holding a hand in this delightful game of using Owen—poor Tom would have a chance.

When the three men came into the bungalow, Delilah read in their faces depression; Sweep Up had evidently proved a frost. Even the bright smile and golden swish of the orchid failed to lift the gloom.

Over the tea, Delilah, having broken the ice of reserve that shrouded the men by a query, Andrews explained that Sweep Up had not given much encouragement.

"In the fust place, Mrs. Owen," he said, "the clock is agin him; he run the half-mile, with a light weight on his back, in 52 seconds, an' he was all out, cause the boy didn't spare the flail none."

"But, Uncle," Owen objected, "yu've got a horse in your barn that won't work much faster 'n that, an' in a race he'll reel off three quarters in 1.12 on a fast track."

"That's right, son, 's far 's it goes; timin' a hawse in a stable trial ain't none too sure. I had another hawse that was the other way about—he was a mornin' glory. In the mornin' he'd show me a trial of 1.13 for three quarters, goin' with his mouth wide open, an' in a race he'd get beat in 1.14. No, trials don't land the

purse. But Sweep Up don't seem to be able to extend himself; he's got a choppy gallop; he can't run, or he don't know how."

Delilah put her fingers on the patriarch's arm. "Perhaps that's just it, Mr. Andrews—he doesn't know how to run."

Owen stared. Delilah was stringing with them; and she always had a reason for taking an interest in anything or anybody. Evidently Gerry and Delilah liked each other—little touches showed that they were chummy. What the devil had happened while they were out at the course?

"That's what I've been claiming," Caven thrust in.

"And that's what I told Tom when he spoke of the colt," Owen added; "I said that Mr. Andrews could make him run if he had it in him."

"Mr. Andrews," Delilah interposed. "Stewart and Mr. Caven think it would mean a fortune over the Midas mine if they could win enough on Sweep Up to buy it; wouldn't it be worth while your taking the horse to give him a fair trial? I'm willing to pay all the expenses; and you're so efficient."

"I kinder know the game, Mrs. Owen, but I ain't no miracle worker. This is jus' why I wanted you to come out; the funeral 's yours; what you say goes."

"Mr. Andrews will take the horse and see what can be done," Delilah declared.

Gerry whisked from her chair and laid her warm cherry lips against the olive cheek of Delilah, saying, "Dear, you *are* a sport—isn't she, Tom?"

"Stewart's a good picker," Caven asserted.

Owen should have felt elated—should have, but Static was muttering something he could not interpret.

"Jus' 's you say, Mrs. Owen," Andrews confirmed. He turned to Caven: "You send the colt in to my barn at the Grapevine Course soon's you can."

"I'll send him in," Caven promised. "You've got about three weeks before the Fall Meet, and Sweep Up is in good condition. He's entered in the Boundary Stakes, and that's three thousand."

"Huh—the Boundary Stakes!" and Andrews executed the pondering act of caressing his long beard. "That kinder makes a dif'rence. I got a couple of hawses in that stake, an' your hawse would be coupled in the bettin' with 'em if he was trained by me. You wouldn't get no long odds."

A hush fell over the group at this seemingly unsurmountable obstacle.

"I guess," the patriarch drawled, "I might kinder fix that. Hank Armour handles a hawse, Yellow Tail, that I'm sorter interested in, an' I guess I could nominally have Sweep Up trained by Hank; his stalls is jus' nex' mine."

"But you would look after Sweep Up, Mr. Andrews—you'd really train him, wouldn't you?" Caven asked.

"Hank's kinder a lazy feller an' he wouldn't kick none if he got the honor of trainin' sev'ral hawses, an' wasn't asked to work too much. I guess it wouldn't make no dif'rence to the colt, Hank's name bein' tacked on to the programmes an' entry sheets. If I'm goin' to try an' make good with this hawse for Mrs. Owen, I'll look after him myself."

"Now, Stewart," Caven continued, "that being settled, I wish you'd come up to my room and I'll show you the gold ore that Billy Cliff brought down from the Midas."

Owen opened his mouth to say, "I've seen it a dozen times," but Caven's right eye, blanked by the lid, checked him. "Right-o, Tom. We won't be five minutes," he said to Delilah.

"Oh, don't hurry; it's delightful here. Gerry and I will go out to the cherry orchard."

Mentally vowing that it was the last time for Delilah at The Abbey, Owen followed Caven up to the room.

"Sit down," Caven said, indicating a chair, "we've got to talk fast. Only for Mrs. Owen, Stewart, that old salamander would 've turned us down cold. I guess she took a fancy to Gerry."

"Say, Tom, you don't know Delilah; I promised her a trip to Paris if we won out on the Midas. See! That got her. Some women you can fool all the time, but with Delilah if I win one throw out of ten I'm satisfied."

"Yes, the Midas. But to get that, Stewart, we've got to act quick; we've got to tie Armstrong up with a purchase or an option, because if there's a leak about that rich gold vein in the Croesus heading at the thirty-foot level for the Midas, that joins, that old tight-wad will jump the price to a hundred thousand and we can't touch it. We've got to pay him a thousand down for an option to buy at ten thousand. The Midas didn't cost the old cuss but fifteen hundred; he grub-staked a prospector, and then squeezed the poor devil out because he was broke. Armstrong doesn't know the claim is any good, because I promised Billy Cliff I'd take care of him if we got the mine. Armstrong's holding out for ten thousand, thinking that some sucker from New York will come along and buy it."

"Well, Tom, as I told you, I'm up against it for coin

over the Shinin' Tree mine; I'm all tied up, but Delilah's got a fair wad, an' she'll put up the money if Sweep Up makes good in his trials."

Caven took a turn of the floor, and stopping in front of Owen, said: "And Sweep Up won't make good! It's taking too big a chance on him—there's too much at stake."

"Then the thing's off, eh?"

"It isn't off, Stewart—if you're game."

"I'm game if I say so. What is it?"

"I've got in my stable a four-year-old, full brother to Sweep Up, called Duster, and nobody on earth can tell them apart, except for a white spot on one fetlock. I can hide that. A strong permanganate of potassium wash, brushed in three times, and not even Jack Andrews will know but what he's got Sweep Up. Duster could lose Sweep Up at a mile."

"Then we'll take Duster," Owen acclaimed.

"Wait! Duster was a good two-year-old; he won three races. Then, at New Orleans, the man that had him, pulled him when he was a hot favorite, and the play was so raw that jockey, horse, and trainer were ruled off. When I bought this place from that owner, both colts were thrown in cheap, because Sweep Up was a yearling, and Duster, on account of being ruled off, was only good for breeding. I thought of trying to get Duster reinstated, being a different owner, but if he could run in that stake as Sweep Up he'd be 50 to 1, and he'd carry nine pounds less as a three-year-old, and have ten pounds allowance as a maiden—he'd have only 105 lbs. on his back. Sweep Up never won a race, and is a maiden."

"By gad!" Owen sprang from his chair and paced

up and down the room. "Gee, what a play! But if they caught on?"

"We could take that chance. What's the old man like, Owen—how far'll he go?"

"Nothin' doin', Tom—*nothin'* doin'. I call him the lone wolf—he hunts by himself."

"Well, that simplifies it, Stewart. Andrews will be innocent, he won't know; he'll never suspect. I don't care that he didn't see Duster. If he did discover it, and knew what a killing there was in sight, he'd never squawk, because they couldn't do anything to him; he'd simply claim that he thought he got the horse he saw out here. If it came to a show down, and I couldn't get out of it, all they could do is rule me off, and I should worry about getting ruled off—I'm not on. If we get the Midas we can give them all the merry ha-ha. There'll be just two men know it, you and me; and if they ever come looking for the other horse, Sweep Up, to prove the case, they won't find him—the day after Duster goes in as Sweep Up, the three-year-old disappears."

"It's high play, Tom; the very devilish cheek of it gets my fancy."

"I wouldn't sit into the game, Stewart, for what we could win over the race, but the Midas is worth a million—don't forget that."

"Oh, you Paris for mine!"

"I've been a sucker long enough," Tom declared lugubriously. "I've staked racing men, and I've staked prospectors and mining men, and played the stock market till this whole dang place is mortgaged to the neck. When the 'drys' put me out of the hotel business I had some money, but it's gone."

"You said, Tom, just you an' me; what about Delilah?"

"Keep her out of it, Stewart. If it did fall down—which it won't—wouldn't it be better that she could swear she didn't know anything about it. I'll take care that Gerry doesn't know."

"I guess you're right, Tom. But I'll tell you, Delilah can read your mind when you're asleep. But you're right. Let me think it over for a minute."

Owen paced the room for a dozen turns; then he said: "If I quit you now, Tom, it would look as if I had a yellow streak."

"Gad! they couldn't do anything to you—you wouldn't know anything about it; there couldn't be anything but that I had put something over on Jack Andrews."

"I guess there won't be anything to it," Stewart agreed; "if you can get by Andrews with it nobody else will tumble. And the old cuss is a sport too, he'd just send word to you to come and take the horse away as he wouldn't do."

"That's the way I figure it," Caven declared. "There ain't any of the racing men in these parts ever saw Duster on the track; but they saw Sweep Up, for he ran here in the Spring. And the three-year-old is just as big as the four-year-old; Duster hasn't grown any since he was three. And this very trick has been done before. The biggest race in the world, the English Derby, has been won twice by a four-year-old run as a three-year-old."

"Let's get down stairs," Owen advised; "the whole thing's cooked—it's pretty well planned; an' if we're in luck it'll go through."

When the Owens and Jack Andrews had screeched away in Miss Elizabeth, Gerry turned to her brother as they stood on the verandah, saying eagerly: "I knew that Delilah was boss in that family as soon as I saw her, and felt that if I could make her like me they would take your horse on, Tom."

Caven gave a gruff chuckle. "You've got another little think coming, girl. Didn't you look into that woman's eyes?"

"Yes, I did; nobody could help it; they made me shrink at first, they seemed to stab. But that is just intensity, she's intense."

"Intense is good, Gerry; she's that, and some. Perhaps it's all right if you didn't overplay your hand. If she thinks you are working her—well, good-night."

"But, Tom, it was Delilah that really made Andrews take the horse, and wasn't that because she liked me?"

"It was because Owen promised her a trip to Paris if we snaked the Midas out of Armstrong's grip; and she sees a chance to play a thousand-to-one shot, scoop a half million iron men, perhaps a million—for a mighty small investment. I'll tell you something else, Gerry," he put a hand on the girl's shoulder and gently turned her round till their eyes met—"I've spent a barrel of money over you, but I guess it was worth it. You've got the looks, the dainty ways, and the education; you've been trying to pay it back by helping me out in this deal—isn't that so?"

The girl's eyes drooped a little. "Yes, good old Tom!"

"And you don't care two beans for Owen?"

"No, Tom." Her voice had shed its suspicion of artificiality and was just a woman's soft voice.

"No, you couldn't; he's flash; he's good hearted, and that lets him out. He hasn't got the *it*, the million things that you spell m-a-n. I'm not much better myself because, kind of like Owen, I guess I had to rustle. I was thrown to the wolves when I was young; I wasn't taught anything but get what you want—get it, and forget it."

The girl stroked the strong, firm jaw with petting fingers. "I know what you mean, Tom; you'd like to see me marry the Prince of Wales, eh?"

"You'd be good enough, girl. But now, since Delilah's been here—I saw her eyes blaze when you came into the room. That was because she knows Stewart. He can't help it—he's just a grown-up kid."

"But why was she so nice to me, Tom, if—if?"

"That's Delilah. If she was nice to me I'd take to the bush."

"Well, Tom, I think I understand. I was nice to Mr. Owen, and he's such a great boy that it was easy; that was so that he would help you, I understood that he had lots of money. But, Tom—" and Gerry's voice was anxious with the startling thought—"Andrews is a very shrewd racing man, and he didn't like Sweep Up. If the colt can't win what are you going to do—you won't get the mine."

"Little girl," and Caven pinched the oval cheek, "don't knock. The Lord hates a coward. I think the horse will make good. And, Gerry, if those bright eyes of yours see anything, don't get inquisitive, don't ask questions."

"I don't understand."

"That's right—I don't want you to."

"I promise, whatever it is."

Owen's mind beat a staccato to the purring whirr of Miss Elizabeth all the way back to town. His mind was not an acute one; it did not assimilate, tabulate a thrilling sequence of events with precision.

Delilah's ready acquiescence in the adoption of Sweep Up to pry loose a fortune didn't ring quite sincere. Knowing what he now did it was a good gamble, but Delilah didn't know that hidden thing, and the three-year-old was certainly not an alluring prospect. If Delilah had not seen Gerry of course it would have been purely business; having seen the girl Delilah's interest might be similar to the interest she had displayed in Stella. However, Owen's motto was, "When in doubt, drift." So he waited, expending his energy on a cigar.

Back in their room at the hotel the matter came up; at first little dribbling reminiscences of the afternoon.

"You've seen Caven now, Lilah," Stewart used to punch a hole in the ice, "don't you think that he's a good fellow? He's spent a ton of money over his sister."

"Somebody has."

Stewart checked himself wisely in a flash glance at Delilah's face. "You've got Gerry wrong, girl," he said carelessly; "if it wasn't for lookin' after Tom she'd 've been married long ago."

"Oh! I was wondering. Is she really much older than she looks, Tootie?"

"Damn—I don't know! I guess she's about twenty-one."

"Yes, she's all of that," Delilah agreed simply.

"Oh, hang the girl! It's Tom, and the Midas Mine I want to talk about."

"Yes, of course; we've discussed that so often—

poor Tom! You see, Tootie, I hadn't heard of Gerry before, and naturally I'm interested."

"Well, now that Andrews is to take over the horse, what about the deal?"

"What about it?"

"Speed is the ticket, girl: bang the hot iron; the old tide of fortune stuff—grab it. If Armstrong is put wise to that vein they found on the Croesus we're dished; we've got to tie the old cuss up quick—pay him that thousand for the option."

"You mean, Tootie, that poor Tom plays heads he wins, tails you lose."

"That's not fair, Lilah; he's got the info about the Midas, an' knowledge is always worth somethin'. An' for putting up the money I get a half interest; I risk a thousand now to get a half-interest in a half-million dollar property. If the horse wins the winning's go to pay for the Midas. Tom furnishes the horse and the information, and I furnish the thousand to tie it up."

"I furnish it, you mean."

"We furnish it, Lilah."

"It comes to the same thing in the end; you might be able to paddle your canoe without money, but I can't, I'm a woman. We'll wait a few days, and if Andrews thinks we can win the price of the mine on the horse, I'll pay the thousand to make it secure."

"And if somebody beats us to the mine?"

"They might get a lemon; a mine on paper is all in the air. I know that you are worrying a lot over poor Tom, but I've got quite a bit of responsibility in taking care of Delilah."

"You can't lose, girl. If Sweep Up failed to cop,

and Tom couldn't make good, you've won enough over Condor to pay for the mine."

"Pay for poor Tom, eh, Tootie? Gerry would kiss me on the cheek if I did that."

"But it's Tom's scheme," Stewart pleaded.

"If he can make good it is," Delilah objected. "Look here, Stewart, I'll tell you just what I'll do. If Andrews says the horse is promising I'll pay the thousand, and the option will be taken out in my name. I wouldn't trust Tom Caven farther than I could tickle his nose with a feather. You can draw up a separate agreement that he is entitled to a half-interest when he pays half the purchase price. If the horse fails I'll send an engineer up there, and if the Midas is worth it I'll pay the balance myself."

"Holy smoke, girl! where d'you get that promoter's grab-all stuff—where'd you learn it?"

"From you and your mining chums. I've been bored stiff fifty times while you and the others tried to put it over each other on mines."

"But Tom!" and Owen's voice was a wail.

"For Gerry's sake, Stewart, if I grabbed the mine, I'd make Tom a present of a quarter-interest."

"All right, girl, all right!" Owen agreed, knowing that Delilah had written on the wall. "I'll phone Tom that I'll make good on the thousand."

"That's all right, Tootie. He knows you; he'll know that you mean you will if you can. And tell Gerry to cheer up."

Owen involuntarily shot a quick look at his wife, but Delilah was idly sorting bric-a-brac on her dresser, most disinterestedly.

Three more days and Duster, without a white mark

on him, was standing as Sweep Up in a stall which adjoined Andrews' stable and, nominally, in charge of Hank Armour.

Caven had come in ahead of the horse, who was brought by Mike, and was there when he arrived. He watched with keen interest the patriarch's reception of Duster, alias Sweep Up. There was no indication in the old man's eye or his manner that any suspicion had been aroused; indeed the similarity between the two horses now was so remarkable that a question of identity would have been improbable.

The first thing the patriarch did was to have the plates taken off Sweep Up's feet and thrown into the scrap heap; he had been badly shod, the "Village Blacksmith's" handicraft. Then for three days the colt was given gentle exercise—the slowest kind of a gallop. Even at his work the patriarch rubbed his eyes, for the horse had a springy lope quite different from his staccato gallop out at The Abbey; it must be that the old pates had been pinching the toes, and riding the frogs. And Mike, Caven's boy, had been possessed of hands like a bricklayer, but under Kelly's gentle handling the colt seemed really to have something in him. And then on the fifth day when Andrews asked Sweep Up a question as to speed the colt had reeled off three furlongs in thirty-six seconds.

Andrews slipped his stop watch back into his pocket, pulled a big hand down his flowing beard, and muttered: "By gum! yes, sir, by gum!" That was all, there was no explanation in sight; nothing but that he had made a mistake in Sweep Up's possibilities. "Yes, sir, by

gum! one swallow doesn't make a Spring, and one workout of a hawse doesn't prove nothin', by gum!"

Of course, this was nothing unusual; even in actual racing the patriarch had seen many a horse run like a dog one day, and perhaps within a week come out and run a sparkling race, show dazzling speed, and win.

It was the afternoon of this morning gallop that the stable boy said, "Sweep Up didn't clean up his oats, sir. I don't think he's got any fever or anythin'."

"Huh!" Andrews grunted.

He looked the colt over carefully. Then he put a finger under the horse's jaw and held it against his pulse, counting slowly, a watch in his hand. The pulse was fifty-two—normal; no fever there.

Sometimes their teeth bottered these baby horses, hurt them when they were grinding their oats. Andrew's put a strong thumb under the upper jaw, and one over the lower, opened Sweep Up's mouth and peered at the teeth; then he let the horse close his mouth, and said to the boy, "Go out to my car and see if I dropped my glasses there."

When the boy had slipped from the stall Andrews opened the colt's mouth again—his glasses now riding the bridge of his nose—and examined the teeth carefully. Then he stood back and stared at the brown colt, pulling irritably at his gray beard; he was puzzled.

"By gum!" he muttered.

He walked around the horse examining each leg, then stood back again against the stall, and took off his wide-brimmed hat with a gesture of perplexity.

"Wisht I'd looked into your mouth out at the farm," he confided in a low voice to the horse. "Accordin' to

the registration you're a three-year-old, accordin' to 'em incisors you're a four-year-old. By gum!"

Sweep Up had four *permanent* incisors and two *temporary* ones, one on each corner in both jaws; and no respectable three-year-old should have been possessed of other than two *permanent* and four *temporary* incisors in either jaw. And, also, as conclusive proof, in each jaw the two tusks, or bridle teeth were just breaking through. A three-year-old would not show these at all. At a casual glance from outside this was not apparent. It was by examining the ends of the incisors that the difference was discoverable.

"I've heerd of babies being born with teeth, but I never see a three-year-old cut his second permanent incisors before: you're a wonder—you're a percocious kid. My advice to you is to keep your mouth shut," the old gent muttered.

Andrews stripped off the bandages and swung the colt to the sunlit door, wondering if the fore-legs carried any mark of identification. But they were both a solid brown—the color of Sweep Up's.

The boy came back, saying, "I couldn't find 'em sir."

"I got 'em, lad; they was in my pocket all the time. Guess I'm gettin' ol' an' forgetful. Jus' put 'em bandages back on."

All the way back to his hotel the Man from the Desert kept up a mental review; there were so many angles to this discovery.

Caven had declared that Sweep Up was a three-year-old, and the registration papers showed that Sweep Up was; but this horse in Andrews' stables was a four-year-old—the incisors proved that. In all nature there

were abnormalities; perhaps the chances were one in ten thousand that a colt three-and-a-half-years old, as Sweep Up now was, might have the incisors of a four-year-old—yes, one in fifty thousand.

And then the colt's extraordinary improvement! Yes, it must be another horse—must be a full brother, one of the good colts that Merry Maid had given birth to; Caven must have had the two of them. But why had he bothered over the three-year-old if this were the better horse? Of course there was the nine pounds allowance that the horse would have running as a three-year-old; that was something—but it seemed hardly enough to justify the chances.

Andrews felt that Caven was unscrupulous; he would worry little over the ethics if he could make a killing. And Andrews had learned from Owen that Caven was in a hole financially. Yes, it was the gold mine that would make him take any chance, it was a big stake.

Did Owen know? He must. And Owen was depending upon the patriarch's friendship to say nothing if he discovered the deception. By gum! And it was like Owen not to ask him to help put over this crooked thing for fear of his being ruled off.

The patriarch scratched his head irritably. Yes, nobody could prove he was a party to it—and such a chance! The horse was good, his work showed it. With a light weight he'd pack as a three-year-old if he kept on improving, he'd dang near land that stake.

And if Owen was in it likely Delilah was. She had seemed so anxious for him to take the colt, even when it was evident Sweep Up was not very good. "By gum!"

Probably the suggestion to not make him, knowingly,

a party to the deception was Delilah's. And he couldn't ask her—he couldn't ask Owen; he must pose as having been deceived completely to make perfect an alibi; that is, if he didn't send the horse back.

The patriarch's racing life had been one of keeping out of the bad books of the Jockey Club, and turning every trick he could to win as much as he could every time he ran a horse—that is, when he ran a horse to win. He had no compunction—no throbbing sensibilities. This roguery was not of his planning; it was a case of expediency plus a desire to help Delilah, of whom he was very fond.

He would wait developments—give no sign; train the horse that had been sent to him as Sweep Up, and win with him if he could, just the same as any other trainer would. The only evidence that Sweep Up was a four-year-old was hidden in the horse's mouth and nobody would be apt to discover that.

Each day Sweep Up improved, and when Delilah asked Andrews to tell her about the horse's prospect of winning, explaining that she must decide whether to pay the thousand dollars for an option to purchase the Midas at ten thousand, the old gentleman took off his hat, rubbed his gnarled fingers through the massive gray thatch, and answered: "Well, Mrs. Owen, I ain't asked *Sweep Up* the big question yet."

As Andrews drawled this slowly, his keen gray eyes beneath the shaggy brows were fixed on the girl's face to see if she started when he said Sweep Up; he had emphasized the name purposely.

"The big question?" she queried, and there was no trace of disquietude in her voice.

"I mean I ain't give him a trial with his proper weight up for a mile, the distance of the stake; but judgin' from what he showed me, I'd say with the light weight he'll pack, bein' a *three-year-old*, he's got a mighty good chancet," and the gray eyes had again hung on Delilah's face as Andrews put the emphasis on the three-year-old.

"Then I'll chance it," Delilah declared; "I'll pay the money on the mine, and we'll try to win enough on the horse to come out ahead whether the mine is any good or not."

"It seems a good gamble, Mrs. Owen. Mind, missus, I don't know a thing 'bout *this hawse* except what he showed me."

"You mean that you've never raced him?"

"Kinder that. Hawses is the same 's men; they've sometimes got tricks that you don't find out till it's too late."

"Well, we'll take the chance," Delilah declared.

The patriarch's visual cross-examination had revealed nothing; Delilah was evidently innocent, or some actress, the old man decided.

So that afternoon Delilah wrote out a cheque for a thousand dollars and gave it to Owen, who had it certified in the bank; and the next day the deal was completed with Armstrong for the purchase of the Midas for ten thousand dollars, the balance to be paid in sixty days. This little variation of a purchase instead of an option was a brilliant thought of Owen's; it tied Armstrong up more effectively if there were a leak about the value of the mine, and it rather bound Delilah, who really had money, to buy the mine whether the horse won or not.

"Putting it over on little wife!" Caven had exclaimed with a grin when Owen had explained the Machiavellian touch.

Owen smiled cheerfully. "It'll be my first win over wife if it goes through."

"I guess she won't kick if she gets that trip to Paris; and, if we get the Midas, no matter how we get it, everybody 'll be happy."

A few days before the race, the Boundary Stake, Delilah was down at the course with Andrews, and the latter, as if mentioning it casually, remarked: "The way Sweep Up is workin' I'm glad you got him, Mrs. Owen, 'cause Slipper Dance seems to 've kinder trained off; somethin' else in that stake might've beat your hawse."

"Slipper Dance!" It was a cry of astonishment, of sudden consternation. "Is my horse in the same race? I didn't know that."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Owen; he was entered in all the stakes along with a couple of my hawses, Drummer an' Red Devil. An' I was goin' to scratch Drummer, an' was aimin' at Slipper Dance for this stake afore I hooked up with this three-year-old."

Delilah twisted her gloves nervously—this was startling; she was paying for a horse to beat her own.

"That's a fine situation, Mr. Andrews," she said, anger in her voice. "I'd rather have Slipper Dance win—he's my horse."

"Yes, ma'am, so 'd I. But if you hadn' took Sweep Up some other trainer 'd 've got hold of him, an' as Slipper Dance don't seem at his best, you might 've lost quite a bit over your hawse. I thought p'raps that you

knowed more 'bout Sweep Up 'n I did, 'cause you was the one that got me to take him."

"I didn't know anything about him. I had my own reasons for—well, for helping Stewart's friend, poor Tom." The anger that was still in Delilah caused the "poor Tom" to trail off into a bitter sneer.

A sudden flash illumined the patriarch's mind; he knew how jealous of the fickle Stewart Delilah was, and he hadn't been uncognizant of the sublet by-play out at The Abbey that day, nor unobservant of one or two glances between Stewart and Gerry when Delilah's back was turned.

And twice Gerry had come in to the course with Caven, and Owen had been there, naturally, to meet Caven; Owen had motored back to The Abbey with the Cavens. With a grin Owen had asked Andrews to not mention these two friendly episodes, as Delilah had some temper, and made it unpleasant for him if he even looked at a pretty girl.

So Mrs. Owen had not been made aware of these friendly reunions, the patriarch fancying it was just as well to let sleeping dogs lie; that is, he thought she didn't know, but Delilah had adroitly drawn from Zeb, Slipper Dance's darkey rubber, this information.

This sudden inspiration that Delilah was suspicious of Tom and Gerry made it all the more confusing; who was in the know and who was out of it?

"Come and look at the colt, Mrs. Owen," Andrews suggested; "I guess you never see such a improved hawse."

Sweep Up was being rubbed down in his stall after having done a gallop of a mile. He stood with his

brown head toward the door, and out of habit, Delilah opened her bag and put a lump of sugar in the palm of her hand, holding it toward Sweep Up.

The colt took a step forward, stretched his long neck, and fumbled the cube so awkwardly that it rolled to the floor.

"Clumsy!" Delilah reproved; "at The Abbey you picked it out of my hand daintily."

She put another cube in her hand, and as the horse again lipped it, it also fell to the floor. But this was Delilah's fault, she had been startled. Her eyes went wide in sudden astonishment; they had told her that that heavy mouth with its wider nostrils, was not the baby mouth of the real Sweep Up—it was Duster's.

She shot a look down the fetlock joint, the rubber having removed the bandages after the gallop, to rewind them later on; she was looking for the white arrow; but it wasn't there—the joint was a plain brown.

Andrews had been watching Delilah covertly, and now the very same spirit of inquisitiveness possessed her. She was certain that Caven had substituted one horse for the other, there could be no doubt about it. She remembered Gerry's remark that Duster was a good horse, and Gerry's very unsatisfactory evasive answer when Delilah asked why they didn't run him. Duster had not even been shown to Andrews, not mentioned.

Caven and Gerry were in on the conspiracy, of course; also, most undeniably Stewart—Stewart and Gerry playing a crooked game, and not confiding in her! And it must have been Andrews who had colored the white arrow. And the sly old villain had brought her there to the stall on purpose to see if she would know

that it was not Sweep Up. His present question confirmed this as he asked:

"Don't you think that he looks a dif'rent hawse, Mrs. Owen?"

Quick, subtle, suspecting a lead, Delilah answered, "The colt looks in much better form for racing, Mr. Andrews. I suppose his gallops have taken some of the flesh off."

"Ugh-huh!" the patriarch gutteraled; and mentally he thought, "She's a wonder—if she knows."

The patriarch found himself wishing that Delilah was out of it; he had an uneasy feeling, a presentiment, that something would happen with the unknown quantity of Delilah's knowledge, or lack of it, plus the deviltry that was possible in a jealous woman's mind.

The race was only three days away, thank heaven; and after the race Andrews would yank Sweep Up out of his barn, and—never again!

It was as they journeyed back to town Andrews suggested that they might scratch Slipper Dance, adding, that of course with this horse in the race the odds against Sweep Up would be greater.

"I don't want Slipper Dance scratched," Delilah declared with decisiveness.

"Jus' 's you say, missus—jus' 's you say."

This unhesitating determination faintly suggested that Delilah was not a party to the exchange.

Then Delilah took a turn at the mental probe; from under the wide-brimmed hat her eyes covertly fixed on the ancient one's leather face:

"If Sweep Up loses this sudden improvement," she said, in a voice that suggested nothing but guessing,

"and couldn't win, we'd lose all around if I scratched Slipper Dance; I'd lose that \$3,000 stake."

"The sudden improvement," re-echoed in the patriarch's mind; that sounded ominous; but his face was as expressionless as the mileage gauge that chronicled Miss Elizabeth's progress.

"Yes, by gum! missus, that is so, that is so," he commented. "It was jus' kinder that I thought that, knowin' how fond you are of your hawse, you'd hate to see him get beat. Another thing, Mrs. Owen. I was calc'latin' if Slipper Dance was scratched I'd put my boy, Kelly, on Sweep Up."

"You can have him, Mr. Andrews. I've arranged to have Soren ride Slipper Dance. He rode the horse before, and he's a good boy; I'd trust him implicitly."

The patriarch almost swerved Miss Elizabeth into a street car; he was startled out of his habitual equilibrium. This Delilah was certainly going some; she had taken the engagement of a jockey out of his hands. What the devil was up?

But Andrews commented: "That's fine, Mrs. Owen—that's fine. I was bothered over gettin' two jocks. An' Soren won't ride for everybody; he's so good he can pick an' choose. That's mighty fine."

Right up to the race day nothing had happened to interrupt the smooth flow of this gentle stream of duplicity. There was nothing to indicate to Caven and Stewart that Andrews had the slightest suspicion he was being used. They didn't know that he had discovered the fading out of the permanganate of potassium on the white arrow, and had assisted it in retaining its seal brown.

And Delilah had arrived at no certainty as to the patriarch's complicity.

Andrews was still guessing as to how much Delilah knew; veering from one opinion to the other, and pursuing his habitual course—as he expressed it “say nothin’ an’ saw wood.”

The colt had shown no let-up in his racing quality, and the old man, nominally Hank Armour, had taken care that none of the touts or clockers had seen Sweep Up reel off a fast trial for a full mile. It would be too dangerous; the odds would be so great, twenty or thirty to one unless the horse was touted. That they could afford to take this chance, they would have to bet so little.

He knew that many a race had been left on the track by too great an anxiety to give a horse a fast trial. As he told himself the horse must be a full brother to Sweep Up, and so, bred to stay, being by Broomstick out of Merry Maid; and he had shown speed. And he had had plenty of long work to thin the fat off his windpipes.

Caven and his sister Gerry had come in to see Sweep Up run: win, as Caven declared emphatically, for Andrews had expressed a little more optimism than was his wont.

Owen would have kept Gerry and Delilah apart if he could have managed it without too apparent an effort; but Gerry had expressed herself as being so happy over meeting Mrs. Owen again, declaring that the real enjoyment of seeing Sweep Up win the race would be in being able to thank Delilah for having helped Tom.

And Delilah herself had seemed so pleased over having Gerry to sit beside her that Owen, with a mut-

tered, "Dang too many women anyway!" let matters drift.

Owen was positive that wife knew nothing of the switch in horses. She had not given the slightest indication of anything, not even of a jealous feeling towards Gerry. Of course this was ominous; he remembered how silent, how subtle she had been over the Stella affair. He flattered himself that it was the prospect of great wealth, the trip to Paris, that had glamored that acute mind into restfulness.

When the third race had been run, Andrews rose from the bench on the lawn where he had been sitting beside Delilah, saying:

"Well, Mrs. Owen, this next race is ours: "I'll go saddle up Slipper Dance and throw an eye over Hank gettin' Sweep Up ready."

Delilah strolled beside him, something about Soren and Slipper Dance floating back to Owen and Caven as she moved away.

"I'm not goin' into the paddock," Owen declared to Caven. "I've got a hunch that the less we're seen near Sweep Up the less interest the people will take in him."

"I'm not going either," Caven declared. "I'm just scared stiff that my dang hoodoo 'll get my goat, and I'll say some fool thing."

"Soon's the machines open I'll go in an' plank down a thousand—five hundred your money, and five mine," Owen declared.

Presently Delilah returned, saying: "Mr. Andrews thinks that between the two horses we ought to win the stake."

Owen winked at Caven, meaning, Andrews hasn't

discovered anything, or is the sly old fox; he hasn't put Delilah wise.

"It'll only take one of 'em, girl—Sweep Up will roll home," Owen declared. "You'll pretty near win that thousand on Slipper Dance for second money though."

"I wish we could both win, Mrs. Owen," Caven soothed.

"Thank you," Delilah answered curtly. "But as we both can't win—"

"But, Lilah, if Tom's colt wins we all win—and a big stake. But I must go now and feed the Iron Men; I wouldn't get shut out for the world. Where're you goin', girl?" he queried, as Delilah walked at his side.

"Into the club to bet."

"Sweep Up of course—give me the money—I'll put it on for you."

"I'm going to bet on Slipper Dance," she answered quietly.

"You're crazy, Lilah," Owen gasped—"you're throwin' the money away!"

They were abreast of the steps that led down into the betting room of the club. The steps were like the entrance to a beehive, men and women were jostling and pushing, some going out and some going in, and they could see beyond six long queues of men and women in line, slowly, by attrition, working their way up to the wickets of investment.

"You'd better go back and sit down, Lilah," Owen suggested, pointing at the throng. "You'll never get your money on in time. The club clerks close here a full three minutes before the machines down in the ring, and I've got to hurry to get on there, even."

"I believe you're right, Tootie," Delilah agreed.

"Here"—she placed in his hand a roll of bills—"take this five hundred and put it on Slipper Dance for me, that's a good boy."

"Lilah—listen."

"I don't want to listen—I want action. If you won't do this for me I'll have to go down there myself."

"You couldn't make it, girl; it's a mob—they'd tear the clothes off you."

"Well, you do it then for me—it isn't your money, it's mine."

"Heavens! yes; Good-night! Here, kiss this five hundred good-bye, girl."

Then Delilah went back to where Gerry was sitting alone, and sat down returning the girl's sunny smile with one that suggested a quiver from the Northern Lights.

"Shall we have a stroll on the lawn, dear?" Gerry asked. "I'm so nervous, so excited, I can't keep still."

As the two girls strolled up and down the beautiful green lawn it would have been difficult to decide which one was the magnet that drew admiring glances from the men, and the critical, not too friendly, appraisal of the women—they were such artistic foils: Delilah, with her tall, lithe, capable figure, and the dark face so full of passion possibilities, and draped in the well-tailored simplicity of perfect art; or Gerry, the veritable orchid.

Her slender, gentler figure seemed to cling to the taller woman. As they walked, Gerry with one hand hooked into Delilah's arm, the sunlight detached itself into little streamers of gold that clung to the full mass of golden hair; she was a girl, just a girl, one almost to be pitied as having to travel the rough paths of life with so much

of beauty in the face, and so much of trustfulness in the limpid eyes.

Thus from the apparent. Inwardly Delilah was thinking, "This clever little devil is at the bottom of all this."

And Gerry was communing with her unrest: "I hope Stewart doesn't do or say anything—I'm afraid of this woman!"

A tremor of vindictive Static seemed to tremble along her fingers from that sinewy arm, and when the black eyes suddenly looked into hers at times, she shivered—and smiled.

"I can see the horses coming out of the paddock," Delilah said; "we had better get that bench before somebody else gets it."

Caven was standing beside the bench, and Andrews came lumbering through the paddock gate and joined them.

As the horses passed to the point of alignment, the start, just beyond the Judges' Stand, Caven said:

"By jinks! Mr. Andrews, Sweep Up looks good. You've made a big improvement in him; hasn't he, Mrs. Owen?"

"Yes," Delilah answered readily; "he's a different looking horse to what he was out at The Abbey."

Caven involuntarily looked at Delilah, but she was placidly contemplating the horses.

Owen came bustling back just as the racers had swung from the parade and marshalled against the starting gate. "I punched my way in, and punched it out again, but I was in time. Dang few of 'em bettin' on Sweep Up; it's all Slipper Dance, Blackstock, an' The Piper," he said.

"They're off!" a multitude of voices in the stand roared, and there was the pushing sweep, the hammering drum of hoofs, the flicking of gaudy silks as the lean-necked, eager steeds, driven by the mannikins atop, raced for the turn.

"Hell!" It was Caven's voice. Sweep Up had got away in the ruck, he was in the jumble of horses that were fourth, fifth, sixth.

And the lean, black, symmetrical form, Slipper Dance, was out in front, the red sleeves of the black jacket of the jockey Soren, skimming along as if the boy ran on the top plate of the rail, he had laid the black in that close.

"By gum!" the patriarch muttered; "Soren, Soren!"

And still the brown, Sweep Up, was in the mêlée of trailers. They could see jockey Kelly, his green-sleeved arms twisting up and down, and knew that he was riding, fighting for an opening. Once Andrews muttered, "Kelly's gettin' a rough journey—an' Sweep Up's a hard hawse to place."

"Kelly's riding a damn bad race!" Caven growled; "he's riding like a green boy. Why doesn't he sit down and wait for an opening?"

"I never saw him ride such a bad race before," Owen muttered. "That kid's got a nut like a cool prize fighter, but he's ridin' 's if he had a door knob on the end of his neck."

Between Slipper Dance and the struggling Sweep Up was a bay, Blackstock, and lapped on his quarter a chestnut, The Piper; that meant, as the patriarch knew, that Kelly would have to take Sweep Up around the three leaders, and, if he tried that, perhaps he would be carried wide into the stretch.

Depression had hushed Caven into sullen silence. He

knew enough of racing to know that Kelly, having lost the advantage of the start, should have waited for an opening; but there he was taking out of the brown, Sweep Up, the energy that would be needed for the final pinch.

As the horses raced down the back stretch and their colt still trailing, there were tears in Gerry's voice as she cried, "Oh, Sweep Up is losing—he's losing! Why doesn't the jockey make him go faster?"

Now the brown colt seemed to have found his stride; before, it had been all jumble, knock; he crept up foot by foot till he was lapped on The Piper. And Kelly seemed to have regained confidence; he had sat down and was nursing his mount.

The Man from the Desert pulled at his beard and said; "At las' Kelly's got a chancet, but Sweep Up's got to be a good hawse to win from there."

But Sweep Up was going with a rhythmic swing that suggested to the eager watchers that he would yet win.

Then the old man gave a loud groan, and muttered: "Oh, Lor'!"

For Kelly, as if his horse had stumbled and fallen back, pulled him in against the rail behind the leaders.

"Kelly's took a chancet," Andrews said to Delilah, who was standing against his shoulder; "I guess he felt Sweep Up tirin' an' thought he couldn't make it by goin' round; he's took a chancet for an openin'. I guess 'tain't no sure thing for him now."

But as the horses swung into the stretch they could see the bay horse, Blackstock, bore in flat on the quarter of Slipper Dance and The Piper, who had carried a little wide, now pulled in and all but knocked Sweep Up

to his knees as Kelly tried to shoot him through the opening.

"That's a bad ride your boy is putting up, Mr. Andrews," Caven declared, anger in his voice; "he's thrown the race away now."

"It's kinder my fault," the patriarch answered. "When I throwed Kelly inter the saddle he was sick—he's been wastin' too much to make the weight. But it was too late to make a change. I thought he'd be all right when he got goin', but I'm feared it's too late, he can't win from there."

No, he couldn't. To the thunderous roar of the stand beyond, the mad scramble of men who raced here and there across the lawns, the black form of Slipper Dance caught the Judge's eye half a length to the good.

And Sweep Up, proving he was game, had made up half-a-dozen lengths and finished second.

With a gasp, tears welling in her eyes, Gerry had collapsed on the bench, a shrivelled orchid.

Caven's face was a blank, sullen with the stupor of despair.

"By gad!" Owen rasped, as his throat loosened.

Andrews stepped from the bench in solemn despondency. He lifted his big gray hat, saying: "Mrs. Owen, I got to take off my hat to you; you was right, an' I don't blame you."

Then he strode solemnly off into the paddock.

Delilah stepped blithely down, and carrying Stewart a little to one side, said: "Give me the winning tickets on Slipper Dance."

"There ain't no winnin' tickets on Slipper Dance!"

he growled. "The other was a sure thing accordin' to Jack, an' I didn't bet it—here's your money."

"Didn't bet it!" Delilah gasped.

"No. If it wasn't for that dang crook, Kelly, throwin' the race you'd 've lost it anyway. There was somethin' in that race, you didn't know anythin' about. It was a sure thing if Kelly hadn't thrown it away."

"I *did* know, Stewart, though you didn't confide in me. I knew you and poor Tom were running Duster, a four-year-old, as Sweep Up, a three-year-old. When I walked out to the paddock with Andrews I heard a little bird whisper in his ear that if Sweep Up beat Slipper Dance he would get ruled off and I would claim the race."

"You—Lilah—you did this! Why?"

"To mark 'paid' to Gerry's account, Tootie, dear."

The Thirst for Knowledge

THE hotels were not so full but that Jimmie Bankes could have secured a room; but, you see, he hadn't the price—not unless he cut into his betting stake, the shoe-string roll that he hoped to run into big money, perhaps a "grand" or two.

So Jimmie was enjoying the hospitality of Nicky Lavine, who was night watchman at the Woodland Course. Not bad quarters just for sleeping in, the coat-room. And Nicky did most of his watching sound asleep lying on the roll of blankets beside Jimmie.

In truth there was nothing much to watch out against—the possibility of a fire starting from a slumbering cigarette, perhaps.

It was three o'clock one morning when Jimmie Bankes sat up, cocked an ear like a fox terrier, and, though for a second he heard nothing, knew that some unusual sound had brought him out of his light sleep.

Ah! the deadly stillness of the night was just faintly disturbed by a noise that was like the creak of a gate, or the whine of a stall door; it couldn't be a stall door for it was not so far away as the stables.

He had ears like a fox, he could swear he had heard the push of horses' hoofs on yielding earth.

Jimmie shook up his companion, saying, in a low voice, "There's something up, Nicky. Slip the hood over your bullseye, and let's take a peep."

"You lie down and go to sleep or I'll land you one," Nicky growled, half awake.

But Jimmie was up, and reaching down twined his slim fingers in Nick's black hair, saying, "You get up, cause if anything goes wrong I'll get you fired."

There was a milkshake of a moon playing hide-and-seek among fleecy clouds, and as the two came to the corner of the Club Stand they saw, in a transient bright gleam of the moon, the figure of a tall man, atop his shoulders a wide-brimmed slouch hat, standing on the course at the Judges' Stand. His head was bent, and one hand held out the side of his long top-coat, indicating that he was consulting something in its hiding.

"A stop watch!" Jimmie whispered.

"And a bullseye," Nicky added, as a glint from its one eye twinkled against a post of the Judges' Stand.

"It's a night trial—but where 're the horses," Nicky whispered.

Jimmie nudged him in the ribs, and indicated with a shadowy arm a lantern across the course that twinkled three times as it was covered and uncovered.

"Get your timer ready," Jimmie admonished; "they're at the three-quarter post."

Nicky stepped back so the corner of the stand hid him, tested his watch by the light of his bullseye, set it at zero, and then rejoined Jimmie.

The tall man's back was toward them, and Jimmie, clutching Nicky's arm, whispered, "He can't see us; let's get down to the Judges' Stand—we'll keep it between him and us."

Like rabbits they slid through the night gloom, and crouched at the back of the little stand. The lower part was glassed in to within four feet of the ground at the back, and open at the course side. By crouching they were absolutely hidden, and by lifting their heads they could see the silent one on the course.

"Get ready!" Jimmie whispered, as the lantern across the course made one horizontal sweep; and then, next instant, as its light shot downward, Nicky's thumb let loose the little ticking box of wheels. To their ears came faintly a thudding shuffle of hoofs beating the track; like floating shadows two forms glided down the far side, then at the turn below they were lost in the dimming of the moonlight by a ragged cloud. Their ears picked up the galloping steeds before their eyes discerned the darkened something that floated up the stretch; the pounding of the hoofs on the soft earth was like the beating of a drum with a rag doll.

As the two runners tore past the Judges' Stand, one a length in front, the man who had stood so silently at the finish moved on in the direction the horses had gone.

"I don't have to follow him," Nicky said, as if arguing something with himself.

"I wouldn't if I were you—there ain't no ambulance here at night."

"I don't have to, I know who 't is; and I know both horses. The one that won had a white foreleg, just one, Jimmie."

"And then what?" the other asked.

"That's Hoop-la, and the second horse will be Athel, Jack Andrews' second best. The man as time 'em was the old cuss hisself, the Man from the Desert."

"Yes, 'twas old Jack," Jimmie concurred; "he

couldn't disguise hisself unless he run a lawn mower over that alfalfa on his chin an' come out in a bathin' suit. I'd know Andrews 's far 's I could see him by his sad hangin' drapery. What 'd run the three-quarters in, Nicky?"

"Come on inside."

"Just within the Stand Nicky uncovered his bullseye lantern, and holding the stop watch, gave a whistle. "Gee 1.13½! an' in the dark, an' Athel under wraps. That horse can reel it off in 1.12 any old day, judging from that."

Suddenly Jimmie took a hitch at the band of his trousers, saying, "I'm goin' to make sure—I'm goin' to find out somethin'. Jack Andrews' stable is outside the track, on the Lake road, Tom Nevin's barn. They'll take the horses round the course, an' out the bottom gate; I can beat 'em to it." Then he was gone.

Jimmie slipped through a leaf-door that was in the big gates just by the Stand, crossed the street car tracks, and running on the grass beside the concrete walk passed swiftly down the lake road. In ten minutes a frame barn, behind a small brick house at the end of a drive with a pair of white gates, was on the left. Jimmie vaulted into the next lot, slipped down along a bordering wire fence, and dropped flat behind a row of bushes, through which he could see the stable doors that faced that way.

"They ain't come back yet," he muttered, for the doors were closed and all was still.

He waited fifteen minutes; then he heard hoofs lifting and falling on the road beyond; then one of the white gates creaked as it swung. Feet were crunching the gravelled drive, and in the moonlight he could see

the tall figure of the patriarch as he walked in front of two horses led by the boys who had ridden them. He could see plainly enough now the one white foreleg of Hoop-la, and that the other horse, a bay, was undoubtedly Athel.

He was in an ecstasy of discovery, the certainty of it, for if Athel could finish within a length of Hoop-la, 13½ seconds for the three-quarters, he was a good one—pounds better than he was supposed to be. Old Jack was out for a killing on Athel; the odds would be good, but Jack was making sure of the horse's form. And how under cover Jack Andrews had been keeping Athel's class. But that was like Andrews—Jimmie knew old Jack, always a sure thing when his money went down; and odds—oh boy! Athel would be 10 to 1 any time amongst good horses.

Now the patriarch had unfastened two padlocked stalls; the horses were led in, turned around, and Andrews lighted a lantern in the stall where the white-legged horse stood, saying; "Billy, you slip down to the gate, an' if you see any one hangin' round, whistle, through your fingers."

To the other boy he said: "Dick, you strip the saddle from the other hawse, go at him with a straw rub. Leave the top door open for him to cool off, 'cause you ain't got no light. I'll do this one down, then I'll come to your stall."

Andrews closed the door of the stall, both lower and upper halves. Presently he opened the lower half, and thrust out a saddle, closing it again.

Three minutes Jimmie lay there, and he could hear within the stall a strange hissing whistle as the patriarch rubbed the horse down with great handfuls of straw.

Old Jack must have found it too hot, for he opened the door and thrust his head out in a listening attitude. He concluded it was pretty safe with the boy down at the gate watching, for he swung the door wide, and in his shirt sleeves went at the horse again.

Then the patriarch knelt down and proceeded to strip from the horse's right foreleg a white bandage, and lo—Jimmie rubbed his eyes—there stood the horse that had gone in with one white leg with two forelegs of an almost black! Just a trick—one of clever old Jack's tricks in the way of deceit! This horse wasn't the white-legged Hoop-la at all, it was Athel, and he had actually won from Hoop-la!

Jimmie crawled ten feet to the left till he was absolutely opposite the next stall, the door not ten feet away, just across the drive.

Andrews, carrying the lantern, came to the other stall, saying, "Did you give him a good rub down, Dick?" for the cover had been brought back over the horse again.

"Yes, sir; he cooled out pretty well walkin' back"

"Hold this," and Andrews handed Dick the lantern. Then, kneeling, he unwound from the horse's forelegs two dark blue bandages; there was the white foreleg now—it had been well hidden by the dark bandage. This horse was Hoop-la.

"I'm flitting," Jimmie muttered; "that's all for to-night."

He circled down through the back end of the vacant lot to avoid the boy at the gate, and crossed a field on his return to the Stand.

"Gee!" he muttered, "old Jack's the limit. Anybody happenin' to see that trial would think Hoop-la,

with his white leg, had won—that's what Nicky thinks. Athel is the sure pippin."

When Jimmie crawled into the coat-room Nicky asked, "What 'd you find out?"

"Them horses was old Jack's right enough."

"What was Jack tryin' with Hoop-la?"

"Must 've been Athel, I s'pose," Jimmie said.

"Yes, it'd be Athel; an' let me tell you if he could finish within a length of Hoop-la in 1.13½ he's some horse.

"You've said it, Nicky!" and inwardly Jimmie muttered, "He's some horse to *beat* Hoop-la a length."

"Where'd you get that swell gold watch?" Jimmie asked, not wishing to carry on too much about the horses for fear he would let something slip.

"That's Pat Donnelly's."

"The tipster's, Nicky?"

"Sure thing."

"You workin' for him?"

"You've said it, kid. An' it'll cost him a nice little bet laid down for me when I spill this to him."

"Where do I come in?"

"Where do you come in? You come in with the cat. Pat pays me for this job, an' because you're bunkin' with me don't mean that you cut in on my rake-off. If Pat wants to stake you to a bet, that's between you two."

"Donnelly wouldn't stake his own mother to a meal unless she could show him a profit, an' you know that."

"I got it written in blood on a slab of marble, Jimmie; that's why there ain't no room for two—d'you get that?"

"I get it," Jimmie said sullenly. "There ain't nothin'

in it anyway. When you tell 'Gravel-face' Pat that we see Hoop-la beat Athel a length he'll tell you that there's street cars in New York. That won't be no news to him. He can't make no money out of tippin' off people Hoop-la's a good horse, can he?"

"But when I tell him that Athel was well up on Hoop-la, the three-quarters in $1.13\frac{1}{2}$, can't he get a place to have a bet down on Athel at good odds. The public won't know what I tell him, will they?"

"I'll know."

"Well, Jimmie, you go broach Pat, or catch a sucker for yourself to bet on it; I don't give a dang what you do."

"All right, Nicky," and Jimmie curled down under a blanket, determined that now he would keep what he knew to himself; let Nicky go on thinking that Hoop-la had won the trial. He knew that Jack Andrews would put it over some way, and with what he had learned that night he might cut in on it. If Pat Donnelly would act right, put a bet down for him, he might give the tipster the straight ups of it, not otherwise.

When Jimmie asked Donnelly if he would put a bet down for him on the good thing, the heavy pebble-skin face of the tipster was as responsive as a block of concrete.

"I just chased Nicky Lavine," he said; "you boys must think that I'm a kind of Rockefeller handin' out nickles to school children."

"I could give you better dope on Jack Andrews' horses than Nicky," Jimmy hazarded.

"Nobody never could give nobody any true dope on Jack Andrews' string; I know that old cuss only too well. There ain't a clocker alive can catch his horses

doin' anythin' that's worth a hang, and the stewards can't clock old John down fine enough to get the goods on him. Anyways, Bankes, I'd get fat, and so'd my clients in Chicago an' New York, backin' Andrews' horses at even money; that's what Hoop-la and Athel " be coupled in the Prince George Handicap; they're both entered, an' that's what Jack's aimin' for. He can win it with Hoop-la if the handicapper doesn't pile too much weight on the horse."

"I got it!" Jimmie declared. "If they stick 130 on Hoop-la, an' 'bout 104 on Athel, Jack'll scratch Hoop-la to get a price against the other one. You put a bet down for me, Mr. Donnelly."

"But you ain't told me anythin' new—I know all that now. You go get a sucker for yourself, Jimmie; I'll tell you one right now, that Western minin' man with the big di'mond; he's easy."

"Jack Andrews trains a horse for him—they're friends."

"No he don't. Jack an' that fresh guy had a row this mornin', an' Owen took his horse, Attorney, away from Jack."

Jimmie could see that even if he told Donnelly that the other horse had really beaten Hoop-la in the trial, told him of the white bandage, it would get him nothing. Pat Donnelly was noted for his selfishness; he was more like an animated plaster man than a human being—no feelings.

Jimmie, though a tout, had quite a sense of honor. He knew Jack Andrews, and admired the old gentleman. To go to the man who had quarrelled with Jack and give away this stable secret, tell it to a man like

Owen who was a heavy plunger, didn't appeal to Jimmie. He went, instead, straight to Andrews.

"How you be this mornin', Jimmie?" Andrews greeted, as Bankes came down the white gravelled drive to find the patriarch sitting on a little bench outside the stalls.

"I came to—a kind of a proposition, Mr. Andrews."

"Well, James, the hawses has worked, an' I was jus' sittin' here doin' nothin' but listenin' to the music of 'em grindin' their oats." The patriarch jerked a thumb toward the open half doors. "There ain't no sweeter music to a man as likes hawses than to hear 'em cleanin' up the feed boxes."

"I wanted to get a bet put down for me, Mr. Andrews," Jimmie hazarded.

"I've done that before—not often, not often, lad—got to be a mighty good reason, James. An' I don't bet on other men's hawses."

"It's your horses, Mr. Andrews."

A hollow sound came issuing from the depths of the heavy gray whiskers—it carried the semblance of a laugh.

"You want to bet on my hawses. If you had some plugged nickles, boy, an' could slip 'em into the machines for a ticket, it wouldn't be a good investment—not just now. Hoop-la kinder looked promisin' but he's bruised a heel, pounded a stone with his frog, an' I guess I can't start him for the Prince George Handicap; he looked good in that. Athel's a fair kind of hawse, but he ain't much. I'm goin' to put Sweet Avon in a cheap claimin' race hopin' somebody'll claim her. I was trainin' Attorney for a feller, an' the hawse was jus' commencin' to round to, when the owner—that minin' feller, Owen

—comes badgerin' me that he ain't gettin' no action, says that he wants race hawses to bet on not to see 'em standin' in a stall, so I tell him to take the hawse an' put him in the hands of somebody that 'll help him lose his money."

"Was that this mornin' Hoop-la went lame, Mr. Andrews?" clever Jimmie asked.

"I ain't worked him this mornin', it was yesterday."

Jimmie stared. Old Jack's mendacity was so deuced convincing, apparently so honest, but here, right now, was the clocker's knowledge that Hoop-la had galloped good and strong in the night.

"I want to tell you what I know, Mr. Andrews."

"You talk straight ahead, son, an' I'll sit here kind of a judge. If it's wuth while you get fifty bet for you."

Then Bankes told Andrews what he knew about the trial.

Jack cut himself a corner off a black plug of tobacco, and seemingly was more interested in its succulent qualities than in the narrative.

"I ain't sayin', James," he drawled, when the other ceased, "that that all happened, or that you've had a bad dream; but 'cordin' to your dream Nicky thinks Hoop-la won handy, an' he's told Pat Donnelly that way?"

"Yes."

"An' you ain't told him you dreamt Athel won?"

"No."

"Well, Jimmie, I wouldn't go tellin' that dream about 'cause people might think you was takin' dope. I guess that I might put a hundred dollars down for you on my hawses in the Prince George Handicap if I'm

bettin' 'em myself; there's some good hawses in that race, an' I'm kinder sittin' in bad luck."

"Guess I'll get a move on sir," Jimmie said, kicking at the gravel with a heel.

"Well, son, we'll let it ride that way. If I'm backin' my hawses you're on for a hundred dollar bet. There's jus' one thing more. Mr. Owen, that took Attorney away from me, bets his money like a whale spouts water—as though it wasn't nothin'; an' if he come to know what you see, he'd kill the odds agin my stable, p'raps. He's goin' to start Attorney in the Handicap. That was kinder the argyment: I told him Attorney wasn't ready, needed a race, but he says that he wants action; p'raps he kinder thought I wanted to win that two thousand dollar stake myself, I dunno."

"Say, Mr. Andrews, I was born on the sea shore, an' I used to go down on the sands tryin' to talk to the clams, an' I sorter learned from them how to keep my mouth shut."

"That's right, boy; you'll be on a hundred, win or lose."

Jimmie Bankes wandered up town, and in a paper saw something that caused him to whistle. It was the published handicap for the Prince George Cup. There was the bruised heel—Hoop-la was top weight, 126 lbs.; Athel was 110. It was a sure thing now that Andrews would scratch Hoop-la, claiming that he had been allotted too much weight.

But what a pipe was revealed to Jimmie, with his knowledge of the two horses. If the handicapper considered Hoop-la to have an even chance with 126 lbs. on his back, what about Athel who had beaten him in the trial with 110 up. The greatest certainty in the

world. The patriarch was out for a killing, sure; and with Hoop-la out of it he would get four or five to one against Athel.

"I see five hundred bucks comin' my way in two days," Jimmie muttered; "the luck's turned—I'll run it into five thousand."

Almost a pity he had given his word to keep the secret. And yet if he told Owen, or anybody, they might promise to bet for him and then welch on it, nine times out of ten it went that way; and it might come to old Jack's ears and he would get sawdust.

Then he commenced to think of Nicky and Pat Donnelly. They had used him mean he considered. Now, Donnelly thinking from Nicky's story that Athel had finished well up with Hoop-la in the trial, would back old Jack's horse at the weight; the odds would tempt him, and he would send out Athel to all his clients. They would only laugh at him if he sent them a hot favorite like Hoop-la would have been, and Donnelly's rake-off would be big, at 5 to 1, for they bet in thousands.

Not a bit of use to tell Gravel-face Pat that Athel had actually won the trial, the tipster would only make this stronger to his clients and give Jimmie the laugh.

Jimmie Banks determined to change his hotel; he couldn't quite relish the idea of bunking with Nicky while he was running out on him. It was Nicky's fault, but still he would shift.

By Jove! he'd go back to old Andrews, tell him about this, and Jack would let him bunk in with his boys at the stable. There was a bond between him and the patriarch now.

In the afternoon he saw Nicky at the Course as the

horses were working, and asked, "Nicky, what about it now; for Hoop-la will be scratched, and Pat's clients'll plunge on the other—do I get anythin' now?"

"Say, Jimmie the Clocker, when you get anythin' bitin' you, you keep on rubbin' the bite. D'you know what Pat's handin' me now. He says that I ain't give him nothin'—that Hoop-la beat Athel, that if Hoop-la's scratched anybody's horse may win."

"Nicky, you're some liar!"

"An' I can bust in your front teeth, too, Jimmie Bankes. An' you can roll your hoop; you can't camp with me no more—I got to give that gold watch back to Pat when the meetin's over, see."

"Pat'll be lucky to get it!" Then Jimmie walked away, now feeling more than satisfied that he hadn't confided in Nicky the truth about the trial.

This was on a Thursday, and Saturday was opening day. The Prince George Handicap was the Stake event of the day, two thousand added, and was run as the fourth race. Water Song would be favorite now that Hoop-la was out; a big black, the image of his sire, Water Color. And the sire had inherited from his English forebear, Water Cress, a great flight of speed which he had transmitted in a lesser degree to Water Song.

Another little touch of transmission had come down through the line, a suspicion of softness, a quitting desire; it was said that if a horse with speed enough looked Water Song in the eye as they fought it out up the stretch, the big black might curl up.

In the saddling paddock the black's trainer had said to his friends, "If my horse runs his race he ought to

win. Now that Hoop-la's out there ain't much in the race; Water Song can outfoot this bunch."

To men who had no right to ask him the question, he said, "I ain't bettin' my horse—he's fooled me too often. I don't dope none of my horses, but what he needs is a shoot of hemp-juice under his jaw. With some Dutch courage he'd finish off by himself."

Jack Andrews, standing like a disconsolate gray-draped figure of desolation by Athel's stall, advised a couple of old friends that if Hoop-la hadn't bruised a heel he'd 've had a right smart chance. "I don't know what they've got agin me up here," he added, "pilin' 126 lbs. on my hawse—I had to scratch Hoop-la out. Water Song's got 124, an' he's beat better hawses at three-quarters than Hoop-la ever run with; the black run it in 1.12. And Athel ain't never won a race under 1.14. Tain't no day for me to bet, I'm runnin' for the purse."

Stewart Owen was a big, handsome, curly-headed Westerner; a Stet. hat cocked jauntily atop the black curls; a smile showed gleaming white teeth almost as brilliant in their radiancy as the big diamond in his tie. Anybody could talk to Stewart Owen, though few were interested enough in Attorney to do so.

Some of them saw Owen draw a roll of bills flashily from his pocket and hand a fifty dollar note to a sporty-looking friend, as he said with a laugh: "I'd feel a sucker if Attorney copped this race and I hadn't a bet down."

"Better make it two dollars, Owen," and his friend laughed.

"I never bet eight bits in my life, not even when I was sellin' newspapers—bet the fifty."

There was an undercurrent of tips on a gray, Rock-salt; the rail birds whispered that he had worked like a house on fire; and he belonged to a shrewd operator, a man who would run a horse half-a-dozen times in the South, in the Spring, get him well beaten, racing him into hard condition, then bring him North for a killing. It was actually, as the bettors said to each other, an open race.

Nicky had been detailed by Pat Donnelly to hover on the heels of Jack Andrews. It was known that the patriarch, a distant recluse of a man, made his own bets, no runner. And Nicky saw Andrews stride casually down to the stall in which Attorney was being saddled by the trainer.

"How about you, Jack?" he heard Owen greet the patriarch, the usual boy-smile on his lips.

"My hawse is fit, but I'll tell you whether he's good enough to win in 'bout five minutes, Owen. Your hawse right sphy to-day?"

The few that were in the inner saddling enclosure of the stalls were up toward the other end looking at the favorites, and Andrews and Owen took a couple of steps into the stall seemingly to look over the horse. Nick's ferret eyes saw that something passed between the two, not a word reaching his ear, for Andrews, who was saying the something, spoke almost in a whisper.

As the Man from the Desert came out he said, solemnly: "This is the makin's of a good hawse, Mr. Owen. Give him a leetle time; don't be discouraged if he don't make good to-day."

Nicky started to trail Andrews, and suddenly taking a look over his shoulder, saw that Owen had disappeared. There he was—there was the Stet. hat popping up into

view beyond the rail that guarded the stalls; Owen had ducked under it, and was now rapidly making his way through the throng in the paddock.

An animal instinct seized Nicky. He shot under the rail, and six feet behind Owen, followed him into the betting enclosure.

Owen with his strong physical force pushed his way through the throng, as he headed toward the far end, to the fifty-dollar wicket. There were not more than a half-a-dozen men in this line. There was a passage in, and a passage out, with a rail between them, and Nicky pushed along the lane that led outward, timing his movements so that he was almost at Owen's shoulder; and saw in his hand a sheaf of hundred-dollar bills.

As Owen shoved the bundle of bank notes through the wicket, Nicky, crowding, eager to get his chest flat against the ledge so that he might hear what Owen backed, caromed with an elbow into the stomach of a choleric gentleman who had made his bet and had turned to come out.

"Where th' hell you goin'—get in the other line if you're goin' to bet!" the fat man exclaimed, giving Nicky a push that almost sent him on his back.

Before he could dodge around the irate one he was jostled again by Owen hurrying out with a great handful of tickets.

"Say, Joe," Nicky gasped, thrusting his head to the opening, "what 'd the cowboy play?"

"He bet on a policeman, an' he'll be here in a minute—get out!" the seller of tickets snapped.

The man who was waiting to bet snarled at him, too. Nicky knew where to find Gravel-faced Pat, just by the little gate of the paddock.

"I see Jack Andrews give Owen the tip to bet on his horse, an' I followed. Owen's bet a thousand or two on Jack's horse."

"Andrews must 've seen you shadowin' him, you mug," Donnelly snarled; "he won't go in himself there now."

"What's the dif'rence," Nicky objected—"you know they've bet on him."

The tout followed Donnelly down the lawn where they could see the odds board. Water Song was favorite at 8 to 5 against; Rocksalt was 3 to 1; while Athel was at 5 to 1. As they looked the man at the board whirled it about, and as it swung back to face them the odds read: Water Song 8 to 5; Rocksalt 4 to 1; and Athel had been cut to 3 to 1. That was the second betting.

"There 'tis," Nicky declared; "that's Owen's bet cut it."

"Looks like it," Donnelly admitted, grudgingly.

Just then a little rat-faced man came darting out from beneath the Stand and whispered to Donnelly; "There's thousands come-back money for Athel!"

Donnelly turned on Nicky; "You damn double-crosser! d'you hear that—big come-back money for Athel? You've tipped the books off in Chicago by long distance."

Now the horses were streaming out to the course, and as they passed the Judge's Stand, the man with the chalk was busy at the odds board with the last odds. The black, Water Song, had gone from 8 to 5 to 2 to 1; Rocksalt was 5; Athel $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. There were some changes in the long shots; Attorney, that had been 30 to 1 was now 20.

The horses turned and travelled leisurely over to the

far side, turning to the right up the chute where the three-quarter post was, the start. The starter had climbed up to his railed platform at the end of the webbing, and the eight horses were taking their positions back twenty yards. The two assistant starters were darting in and out, keeping some of them back, edging some of them on, as the horses came slowly forward to the starting gate.

There were a half-dozen mix-ups. Twice the big black Water Song, went through the webbing; twice he wheeled and refused to join his horses, rearing, and all but unseated his jockey.

Jack Andrews and Stewart Owen stood on a bench on the lawn.

"Water Song won't give 'em his runnin' to-day," Andrews said presently; "I know that crazy brute. Shouldn't wonder if somebody did give him a shot in the arm."

"The gray's quiet enough, Uncle," Owen declared.

"Yes; he ain't a bad hawse. There's a better one though over at that post, Gold Foil. But I ain't worryin'—there ain't none of 'em to worry 'bout only the black. If he'd run straight an' true we might get beat—but I don't think he will. I'll always take a chance against bad actors."

But the air was filled with the noise of a storm, the roar of voices; and on the far side of the course were streaming down its back length the runners. The black had got away well.

"What's runnin' with the black?" Owen asked.

"A bay—a head back. Your hawse, Attorney, Owen. He always was a good breaker. The boy lifted

him across from the outside, an' he's got clear sailin'. Athel didn't get away none too good, he's fifth."

Now they saw the gray, Rocksalt, that had been on the rail, creeping up on the black, and beyond the black the bay, Attorney, was racing him head and head.

"Can Attorney stay, Mr. Andrews?" Owen asked.

"He can stay; he showed me a good mile once."

Athel had crept up, and his nose nodded at the tails of the three who raced in front.

Around the lower turn they swung, and Andrews could see that the boy on the black was driving him; and Water Song was answering. He was a neck in front of the gray, half a length in front of Attorney, who had been carried slightly wide at the turn into the stretch.

"Fagan knows," Jack Andrews muttered from below his glasses, "that if they ever head the black he'll curl up; he's at his limit right now."

"How's Attorney goin'?"

"Right smart, Mr. Owen, right smart. He's got more courage than either of 'em other dogs. For a 20 to 1 shot he's doin' right smart, I should say."

"Holy smoke!" Owen yelled, "he's creepin' up on the black—he's gettin' him! he's gettin' him!"

"Kinder think he is, son; kinder looks 's if you had a mighty good chance of coppin' this race. An' I ain't goin' to get nothin' on Athel—I can see that."

Then the bay head on the outside of Water Song nodded at his throat latch, and the boy on Attorney was just swinging his whip back and forth below the horse's barrel, not touching him; he was just hand-riding the bay.

A whip was cutting at the black's flank, and the soft-hearted horse when he caught the glint of a bay head in front of him to the right, curled up, and the gray took his place to race beside Attorney. His jockey, too, was driving, but the boy on Attorney was still hand-riding, still gaining, and fifty yards from the finish he was a length in front.

And he finished a length in front, the gray second, and Athel third.

"By heavens! Uncle, you're a wonder!" and Owen held out an eager hand.

Andrews screwed up his glasses, and dropped them into the case ignoring the hand, saying, "I wouldn't say nothin' 'bout it, son. All you've got to do now is collect."

Pat Donnelly cursed, muttering: "Athel pulled off—never tried a yard. What 'd Hoop-la 've done to that bunch, an' Athel is as good! But I ain't goin' to let that old scoundrel get away with it; just here I get him ruled off."

The crowd was stunned. However it was always happening, a long shot turning up.

But Pat Donnelly wasn't stunned—he was galvanized into vicious action. He darted down to the rail about the enclosure where the three placed horses stood while the jockeys were weighing in, and grasping the arm of Maken, the owner of Rocksalt, poured into his ear that he could prove Andrews had pulled Athel to let Attorney win—that there was collusion to put the long-priced horse over; he told Maken about the trial.

"I'll take a chance—there's nearly two thousand hung up in the purse, and I backed my horse. If I get 'em disqualified for crooked work I win," Maken said.

He swung through the little gate, climbed the steps, and entered an objection.

The numbers were up, but there seemed some delay over the official notice being placed. Perhaps there had been a foul at the lower turn.

Then a messenger was seen to dart from the little enclosure about the Judges' Stand, and say something to Andrews, who stood on the lawn just below.

A sardonic sneer curled Gravel-face Pat's lips, and he said, "That's why I told you to stand here, Nicky. That pair of crooks is goin' to have the race took away from them. I'll need you."

Up in the Judges' box a steward said to Andrews: "We've been informed this race was a frame-up—that you pulled Athel, and had your money on the winner; that there was collusion, detrimental to racing, between you and Mr. Owen."

"Wasn't no pullin' Judge," Andrews answered. "Athel run his race; he can't beat the winner; I'll let anybody take the two horses out an' see if he can."

"This man states that he has witnesses that you tried Athel out with Hoop-la in a night trial, that he showed he was as good as Hoop-la, and they ran it in 13½. Now this race has just been run in 14; and what would Hoop-la have done with 110 up."

"Nobody never see Athel in a night-trial with Hoop-la, Judge."

"Did you have a night trial, Mr. Andrews?"

"Yes, sir; there ain't no law agin that. But Athel wasn't in it; it was the winner, Attorney, that held Hoop-la safe."

"Ah!" The two judges and the two stewards had all exclaimed ah! they smelled a mouse.

"Did the owner of Attorney know about that?"

"Yes, sir; he saw it, though I guess 'em witnesses didn't see him; he was over at the post startin' the hawses."

"Then why did he take the horse out of your training?"

"Well, it was kinder my advice, I guess: my hawse 'd be a mighty short price, an' his hawse 'd be coupled in the bettin'. That didn't seem fair to him; it ain't a fair rule nohow 'mongst hones' men."

"Ah-ahem!" This was the interrogating steward; the others smiled.

The stewards consulted a little; then one of them 'phoned across the track, and the red and white "Official" board swung below the names of the three horses.

"Mr. Andrews," the Steward said, "we can't find any violation of the rules in what you've done, but you must remember, my dear sir, that racing is a very high-class sport—*very*! A little less subtlety perhaps on your part would please us."

As Andrews crossed the lawn on his way back from the Stand, he met Bankes.

"James," he said, "you kinder got the white-legged hawse mixed. I didn't bet that hundred on Athel, as I said I would, but Mr. Owen appreciates you keepin' your word, an' I think is quite willin' to give you the hundred—he's been a bit lucky."

VIII.

The Joke Horse

DOC FISHER was peeling potatoes for breakfast for the stable hands, and on an upturned bucket sat the Man from the Desert, the firelight picking out blue shadows in the long gray beard that almost shrouded his lean face. He was saying:

"'Taint Yellow 'Clipse I'm worryin' so much 'bout, Doc, as a boy to ride him. He's kinder notional, and I've been tryin' out these boys here, seein' if I could discover one could raise a gallop out of him, but I ain't found one yet."

Doc Fisher plunked viciously a peeled potato into the pot of water.

"There don't seem to be no good boys no more, Mr. Andrews. There's 'bout twenty right here on this Fair Ground course, an' I ain't seen one of 'em that I'd give shucks for a contrac' on. All they know is to ride one of 'em cart-hawses-shouldered hawses of the Copper Bottom breed or Steel Dust tribe, an' flail him with the bud from end to end of a quarter-mile dash."

Jack Andrews sighed and drew a big bony hand down his beard.

"My hawse runs with his head, Doc. You've heerd 'em say that hawses don't run with their heads—that's when a hawse has got a kind of homely face on him—

but Yellow 'Clipse can gallop when he likes, an' when he don't like a boy he jus' won't try."

"I knowed a boy oncet—Eddie Jim. I see him ride up to Waco. He lives near there. Wisht he was here."

"These rangers that calls themselves jockeys would ride a strange boy off the track; they'd put the fear o' God in him," Andrews declared.

"They wouldn't put the fear of nothin' into Eddie Jim. His father was Frank Jim, one of the Jim boys. You've heerd of them—everybody has. An' it runs in that fam'ly to take care of theirselves; there ain't nobody goin' to make one of the Jim tribe lay down. I wisht Eddie Jim was here now, Mr. An——"

First the potato, then the knife clattered from Doc Fisher's hands, and his eyes bulged like a lobster's as he stared at a pale pinched face that seemed hung on the night wall, nothing of a body demarcated in the gloom.

Doc Fisher struggled to his feet, gasping, "Who you be, there?"

The face floated forward and the firelight picked out from the general obscurity legs and arms and a small torso that had to do with the face.

"Eddie Jim—Eddie Jim, that you, boy? Or be you jus'a trick?" Doc Fisher gasped.

"I'm Eddie Jim, Uncle Doc," a thin voice declared. "I been lookin' all along the stalls in all the barns for you, 'cause the fellers said you was here."

The boy drew a sleeve across his eyes and reeled; then there was a smothering sob in his voice as he said, "Guess I'm plumb tuckered."

Doc Fisher pulled the lad into the light, gazed into

his face, and said, "You're plumb starved—that's what you be, Eddie Jim. When'd you grub las', eh?"

"I ain't too hungry, Uncle Doc. I ——"

"Yes, you be; but you'll soon get over that. Sot yourself here till I fry you somethin'."

Doc Fisher shook up the fire, darted into the empty stall and back again with a slab of bacon.

"This is him," he said, nodding to the gray-whiskered Andrews. "Jus' 's soon's he gets to takin' this med'cine I got here we'll talk 'bout —— This be Mr. Andrews, Eddie Jim," he added, breaking off. "Mr. Andrews has got a hawse, an' as soon's you've eat we'll see 'bout somethin'."

"Guess I'd bes' kinder pasear out to the farm," the Man from the Desert said, rising. "The boy ain't feelin' none like talkin' now; guess he's goin' to be kinder busy the nex' half hour from the looks of him. If you'll sort o' fix up things, Doc, 'bout his canterin' Yellow 'Clipse in the mornin', I reckon it'll be all right. There's a somethin' kinder runnin' through a crack in my skull. It might be as well Eddie Jim didn't say nothin' 'bout his ridin'—jus' let on he's an exercise boy; then these scalpin' jocks won't Injun him none."

"Eddie Jim never was a gabbin' sort, Mr. Andrews."

"An' if you can fix up to keepin' him here, an' feedin' him, Doc, I'll pay for it, 'cause there ain't no room out to the farm where I'm keepin' my hawse." The man from the Desert held out a big bony hand to Eddie Jim. "Good night, boy. You take advice from a man was young as you oncet; you roll your hoop with the old heads if you want to get on; the boys here is only jus' waitin' for sundown an' hell raisin'."

The tall gaunt figure of Andrews—gray hat, gray

beard, dust-gray clothes—melted into the night gloom, and Doc Fisher, sitting on the upturned bucket that Andrews had left, with happy delight in his face, watched Eddie Jim revelling in the bacon and fried potatoes.

Presently the boy stopped eating for a truce.

"You've got to excuse me, Uncle Doc, for kind of hoggin' it, but I ain't had nothin' but a molasses loaf for two days."

How'd you get here?"

"I crawled into a freight car at Waco, and we've been sidetracked an' shunted an' banged about so's I thought we'd run off the track a dozen times. I just had sixty-five cents when I started, an' I got so danged hungry I crawled out at a little place at night an' got a molasses loaf—fifteen cents."

"What for'd you come down here, Eddie Jim?"

Now old Doc Fisher was just one of the loveliest, cleverest, no-goodest men that ever lived; he could plate a horse, train a horse, talk geology, but here he was cook for the One Star Stable. In asking Eddie Jim this question he was fishing; he was sure that the boy had come there because of him, but he wanted to hear Eddie Jim say so.

"'Cause I got to do somethin' to help out. Mother'd got to have help, an' if I could get to ridin'—that's the only way I know to get some money. I heard you was here, Uncle Doc, an' I figured I wouldn't be without someone to kind of speak up for me gettin' a job. Dad had to light out to Mexico mighty quick."

"Well, Eddie Jim, the ways of Providence is more intricate than what a hawse is goin' to do; but jus' some dif'rence to that, son. A hawse may turn out a

mean cuss, an' kick over the bean pot; but Providence is always workin' for the bes'; an' you shovin' your face through the shadows at that minute was an answer to what I was sayin'—I was sayin' I wisht Eddie Jim was here, an' there you be!"

The boy put his knife down and held his hand out to Fisher.

"Uncle Doc, you're mighty good. Mother kind of let me go 'cause I said you was here."

"Wisht I was as good a man as your ma is a woman, Eddie Jim. But as I was sayin'—or was I?—ol' Jack Andrews is as square as they make 'em, an' used to be smarter'n a prairie dog; he's never been in a hole he couldn't crawl out of. He's got jus' one hawse here—Yellow 'Clipse, he calls him—an' opinions is kinder divided 'bout that animile. Old Jack says he's goin' to win here sure, an' the boys says that the hawse couldn't beat one of 'em lizards that turns over oncet a year. He's been here a week, an' that hawse ain't run a mile in a work-out in a two-minute clip; his time seems to be trottin'-hawse time."

"If Mr. Andrews is smart, he just ain't havin' the boy that's got the mount let the hawse out."

Doc Fisher chuckled. "Here's what he does, son: He comes to the track in the mornin', has a stable boy he's got give the hawse a canter oncet round, then he gives one of the jocks five dollars to work out Yellow 'Clipse."

"Five dollars! Sand snakes! That's a losin' mount in a race. Will he give me five dollars for workin' the hawse?"

Again Doc Fisher chuckled. "I guess you'd have to fight for it, Eddie Jim. It's got so that the boys line

up waitin' for Jack Andrews an' his five dollars. He don't never put the same boy up twicet, though; says he's tryin' to find a jock that Yellow 'Clipse'll gallop for; that the hawse has got notions."

"Guess I can't eat no more, Uncle Doc; I never been so full in my life. When I was in that car, an' nothin' to eat, but just the smell of some darn thing that had been shipped in it, I got to thinkin' about the jocks that had to starve to keep the weight down."

"You'd best have a piece of pie now, Eddie Jim; apple is jus' the thing to digest pork on."

"You know hawses, Uncle Doc," the boy said, recurring to business. "What you think about that one of Mr. Andrews'?"

"I dunno, I dunno, son. You see, they call Jack Andrews the Man from the Desert; sometimes he says himself that he's just a desert rat; an' they say that he found a mine or somethin' out there, and he's got a lot of pesos salted away. But bein' out in the wild deserted places for years makes a man dif'rent; he gets thinkin' 'bout himself an' his shoelaces too much."

"Gets kind o' locoed?"

"Maybe; an' it don't show up, like rheumatiz, till a feller gets kinder wore out."

"You think Mr. Andrews's got a pipe dream about his hawse, is it?"

"I dunno; them boys is jus' as keen to find out as I am, an' I guess some of 'em would 've found out some way of makin' Yellow 'Clipse beat two minutes if the hawse could."

"What about dope, Uncle Doc?"

"I don' think Jack Andrews'd give a hawse dope. He says that hawses is the only friends an' relatives he

ever had he'd give a dang for. An' if he was to work that hawse here day after day, cold, showin' up bad, an' then bring him out in a race all het up from dope, sweatin' an' climbin' the clouds, an' win, the stewards'd jus' disqualify him, take the race away an' give Jack Andrews the outside prairie for the balance of his life."

"Must be something, Uncle Doc," the boy maintained; "you say Mr. Andrews knows what he's about
——"

"Eddie Jim, you was eatin' more'n you was list'nin' when I was talkin' 'bout Jack Andrews. I said used to, an' that's kinder dif'rent. I've knew hawses was stake animals at three, high-class, an' sellin' platers at seven. There don't seem no way Jack Andrews can win a race with a hawse that nobody can agitate enough to keep him warm. An' if he was a good hawse, Jack's killin' him workin' him a mile every day here; not jus' canterin' him, but workin' him out. Even dope couldn't make a hawse win if he'd been killed off thataway."

"And I've got to go to work for a man that's bowed a tendon in his nut piece, have I, Uncle Doc?"

"I ain't said Jack Andrews is nutty, an' I ain't heerd of 'prentice boys choosin' their bosses—hirin' their bosses kinder-like. Old Jack is the nicest man you ever worked for; he'd have to be purty nutty if he wasn't. An' I guess it's time me an' you was goin' to roost, Eddie Jim."

Doc Fisher built a snug little nest of straw in the dunnage stall for Eddie Jim, and in the morning he was routed out at the first flutter of gray streamers across the sky. Doc Fisher had been up, and a pot of coffee was simmering over the coals.

"You don't need to hurry none, Eddie Jim," the

chef said, "'cause Jack Andrews won't get here early. He says the raw, damp air of the mornin's ain't good for man or beast."

But later Eddie Jim was taken down to the paddock by Doc Fisher, and about eight o'clock he saw the gray-draped Man from the Desert turn in through the big gates, behind him a sleepy chestnut horse being led by a darky boy.

"Here you be, son," Andrews said, as Eddie Jim touched his cap. "I was dependin' on you, 'cause I didn't bring no boy along to ride this hawse."

Eddie Jim looked curiously at the chestnut. The horse was really a dun—a dusty, cloudy sort of chestnut, and from his withers ran down either side a brown streak something like the cross on a jackass; it suggested a flaw in his breeding. The boy knew that in Texas it meant toughness; not perhaps a stating quality in a distance race, especially if it came from one of the quarter-horse breeds—the Copper Bottom or the Steel Dust breed—for that sort had just the wondrous flash of speed without ability to stay even one mile. He had grown up with horses; it was practically the curriculum of his education—horses.

Yellow Eclipse was not convincing. Eddie Jim had seen milers, even at the half-mile tracks—General Ross, Gray Eagle, Pin Shiner, Jim Hogg; horses that were Thoroughbred, or perhaps a Thoroughbred sire and a dam half Thoroughbred and half Steel Dust or Copper Bottom. All their lines were different from the lines of the quarter horse; slim, flat shoulders they had, and not straight, but running down at an angle from bony withers; between the arms of the two forelegs a deep chest—lung power; and tapering neck, of length, too.

But Yellow Eclipse had the burly shoulders of a quarter horse, the small feet.

But on the other hand, the gray hawklike eye in the lean-whiskered face of the Man from the Desert was not the eye of a flickering brain, of foolish mentality. Eddie Jim wasn't wording his thoughts like this, but he was thinking along these lines.

"Now you take this hawse out, boy," Andrews was saying, "canter him a full mile, an' if he wants to hug the outer rail, let him hug; he'll kinder get 'quainted with you like that; if he thinks you ain't tryin' to boss him, guess you'll get to be pals. Jus' a canter."

As Eddie Jim went through the gate on to the track he noticed against the rail a line-up of many jocks and riding boys, all grinning. He was treated to a barrage of captious pleasantries:

"You Yellow 'Clipse's new rider, kid? You goin' make him burn up the track, baby boy?"

But Eddie Jim, his ears burning, feeling that somehow he was part of the joke, knuckled the chestnut with his heels and broke into a loping canter. Yellow Eclipse didn't seem to have notions of any sort; he didn't hug the outer rail, he just loafed placidly along in the middle of the track. When two fast-working quarter horses came tearing by on the outside, neck and neck, whips flailing their ribs, in a trial, Yellow Eclipse just wagged his loose-hung ears, and when the racers had swirled past, he cocked them forward in disdainful curiosity.

When Eddie Jim returned to the paddock and slipped from the saddle, the Man from the Desert said, "I kinder think my hawse likes your hands, boy; I like 'em, too; I've been noticin'. There ain't one boy in a

hundred's got hands like a girl for hawses, an' the hawses knows it." He turned to the little group of riders who had pressed forward: "Which of you boys is goin' to earn five dollars this mornin'? No, not you, Frankie Fogg." And he pushed an eager one back. "You rode Yellow 'Clipse yest'day."

"Didn't I ride him all right, dad?"

"I ain't got no complaints 'bout your ridin', Fogg, but I'm tryin' to find out what boy does the bes' with Yellow 'Clipse; he's got notions, an' I want him to pick his own jock; I'll know when he gets a boy he likes. An' if I get a right boy he's goin' to win fust day."

Eddie Jim felt a flush of shame and anger redden his cheeks at the heartless laugh this raised amongst the boys.

"You, Johnny Segeen, you ain't galloped Yellow 'Clipse yet. Here's your five-dollar bill; an' you don't spend that, but bet it on my hawse the fust day, 'cause he's goin' to win sure."

Segeen touched the bill mockingly to his lips, then shoved it in the leg of his riding boot.

"How'll I rate him, Mr. Andrews?" he asked, as he drew a knot in the reins.

"Take him out, Johnny, till I see if he thinks you an' him is pals. If he don't like you, nothin' you could do would make any dif'rence. If you was to lay the bud on him, mos' like he'd reach round an' lift you out the saddle by the leg. You jus' ride him as you think best to get the speed outen him, 'cause he's got it."

Eddie Jim, standing by the rail, heard Johnny Segeen say, as he passed down to the turn below the mile post, "I've got the five dollars; that's all anybody's got in this bunch. This cayuse ain't got anything."

Eddie Jim watched curiously the dun horse's gallop of a mile. A trainer standing beside him held a stop watch in his hand; some of the boys had crowded about the timer, passing flippant remarks.

Now about one minute and forty-five seconds would have been a smart gallop for a mile; if Yellow Eclipse could reel off a mile in that time it would give him a chance in a race.

He heard Jockey Fogg say, "Two bits the dun doesn't beat two minutes."

"I'll take that bet, Foggy," Jockey Trent cried.

Now the dun-colored horse had swung up the stretch and at the start, the mile, Segeen shook him up.

Eddie Jim was deceived for a little; the dun seemed to be tearing out at a furious clip; there was so much action; his mouth was open, his head straight out and the big quarters were driving the hoofs into the course with terrific force.

But at the quarter the man who held the stop watch said, "The quarter in thirty seconds!"

"I'll win the two bits," Fogg declared, jubilantly. "He's a quarter horse, and runs his first quarter in thirty; he'll run the last quarter of that mile in 'bout forty."

"Segeen ain't let go his head yet, Foggy; he's got him under double wraps," Jockey Trent declared.

Fogg grinned. "Segeen's just kiddin' his mount—makin' him think he's flyin'. That's the fastest' quarter Yellow 'Clipse ever showed here yet, an' that wouldn't get him nothin' in a race for mules."

"The half in sixty!" the man with the stop watch proclaimed, as the dun raced down the back stretch.

"Segeen's still ratin' him, still got him under double wraps," Fogg jeered.

"The three-quarters in one-thirty," the timer said; "it's goin' to be a close thing which of you boys wins."

Up the stretch the dun labored, and they could see that Segeen was riding, lifting him along with a sway of his shoulders and a throw of the rein.

"One-fifty-nine!" said the timer, dropping the watch back into his pocket. "I guess that hawse must've been bred down from the old four-mile stock, Lexin'ton or Boston, or some of them—the further they went the better they got."

The dun was brought back into the paddock, a blanket thrown over him and the darky boy told to return him to the stable.

"Guess that Segeen wouldn't do to ride him neither," Andrews confided to Eddie Jim. "Yellow 'Clipse is a sluggish hawse, mighty sluggish, but in a race you wouldn't think it was the same hawse nohow—he wakes up." He took a five-dollar bill from his pocket and handed it to Eddie Jim. "That's on account your wages, boy; we'll see how you get on ridin' an' we'll make a contrac'. You jus' don't pay no attention to these Choctaw Injuns that thinks they're jockeys, but stick to Doc Fisher. If you don't need that money to spend, you'd bes' keep it to bet on Yellow 'Clipse nex' week when I start him; you'll get yourself some real money then."

"Thank you, sir," Eddie Jim answered. Inwardly he was muttering, "It'd be comin' to me to eat molasses bread all my life if I'd burn up good money on that mustard coat."

"You got a license to ride, boy?" Andrews queried.

"I ain't—they didn't bother none 'bout a license up at Taylor, where I rode for George Scott."

"Him that kept the saloon?"

"Yes, sir."

"I guess you couldn't get no license to ride for him, boy, an' you'd jus' best forget anythin' he ever learned you. There they was all matched races—pull devil, pull baker; that wasn't hawse racin'. You tell Doc Fisher to see 'bout gettin' you a license from the sec'tary here."

When Eddie Jim got back to Doc Fisher he unburdened his heart:

"I ain't goin' to ride for that dang old fool, Uncle Doc."

"Eddie Jim, Jack Andrews ain't no dang fool—at least he didn't used to be. What's he been doin' now?"

"I can ride as good as 'em jocks here, can't I, Uncle Doc?"

"Course you can, son—better'n most of 'em."

"And that old cuss takes me off his funeral hawse after I'd cantered him, and puts up Johnny Segeen to work him out a mile. If that ain't a kick in the pants, I don't know nothin' 'bout ridin'." The boy had burst into tears and was digging knuckles into his eyes to dam up the flow.

"There, there now, son—there now, Eddie Jim! Don't you take on so, 'cause if you're like that you'll get to be a rider same's a hawse that won't try 'cause he's got beat once or twice. The best kind of sand is where a feller can take a punch an' jus' grin 'bout it. You see me peelin' taters here for a lot of bums, don't you? An' don't you know I've been in some good jobs in my time?"

"But he set me down," the boy wailed.

"That ain't nothin' Eddie Jim. Jack Andrews has

got me guessin' too; he's been actin' as much like a dang fool as he has like a man entitled to be allowed a knife to eat with."

"And you get me a job with a wild Injun like that, Uncle Doc!"

"One job is always one step in a ladder. It won't take long, not more'n a week, for us to know whether ol' man Andrews is gettin' kinder unbuttoned or is like he used ter be. I won't give him no contrac' on you, Eddie boy."

"He wants you should get me a license, Uncle Doc."

"You bet I will, son, an' I'll put in it that I'm your guardeen—that I'm handlin' your book, makin' all your engagements. Soon's you get ridin' I'll cut loose of this chuck wagon an' valet you."

Next morning the Man from the Desert sifted onto the track, but he wasn't accompanied by Yellow Eclipse. The jockeys put up a wail of discontent, the five-dollar fee would not be forthcoming. They crowded around Andrews with solicitous inquiries as to the dun horse's health.

"I was jus' givin' my hawse a rest, boys," Andrews drawled; "he ain't cleanin' up his oats as he oughter." There was a twinkle in the placid gray eyes of old Jack as he added, "I don't seem to've got the right boy 'mongst you chaps—one that can get him to take hold of the bit."

He drew Eddie Jim to one side. And when the boy got back to the One Star Stable he declared emphatically, "Uncle Doc, what d'you suppose Mr. Andrews has fished out of the corral this time?"

"Don't know, son; I told you before that I'd give up tryin' to place the ol' gent."

"He says I'm to come out to the stable where he's at a farm, and give Mustard Coat a gallop on the road this evenin'."

"I swang! Wonder if after all it's a cup o' tea he's aimin' to give that dang critter, an' means to try its effect out where nobody'll see."

"He says that his hawse has run mostly match races on a straight road, an' he wants to see if that's what's the matter that he don't show his speed on the circle. 'Taint' no use, Uncle Doc; he's as loony as a trade rat that packs bits of glass or any old thing."

"Eddie Jim, you jus' natural have took the wrong fork in the trail. This looks to me the fust bit of sense I see come from ol' Jack's hand. He was down here las' evenin' when you was away, an' he says he see your hands holdin' the reins, an' that you can ride good enough for anybody, but he wants to know all 'bout how far he can trust you. 'Course I tells him he can bet on you, kid, till it rains gold dollars. Now what I call the fust act is goin' to be put on. You go out there, boy, an' when you come back don't you tell nobody what you see or hear or done; you promise that now."

"I promise, Uncle Doc, cross my heart."

When Eddie Jim came back from his trip to the farm he said, "Uncle Doc, Mr. Andrews was right about that yellow skate runnin' on a straight track, or he give him somethin' to warm him up, 'cause he galloped like a real hawse."

"An' of course you couldn't time him even if you'd had a split-second watch. When'd you gallop him?"

"Just after sundown, 'twas."

"Well, I dunno. Of course sittin' a hawse out there

an' racin' by fence posts you might've thought you was goin' faster'n you was."

"Mr. Andrews was on a pony, an' we goes down the road what he said was a mile. He tells me to come away full belt from where he's hung a white cloth on the fence when he waves his hat, then he goes back to where we turn off the road to the barn."

"Ol' Jack could time that mile purty close. That what he done—he was tryin' the dun out."

"That hawse has been worked that mile dang near every day, Uncle Doc; there was tracks on the sides of the road where he's been circlin' till he got the word for the start."

"Eddie Jim, if that's so, ol' Jack is a dang fool—he's comin' unbottomed. The boys've been saying that even if Yellow 'Clipse was a good hawse, he couldn't stand bein' galloped a mile on the course here every day; it'd take the edge off him. An' if he's been workin' him out there too, it means ol' Jack oughter be locked up for cruelty to animiles."

Next morning the dun horse was brought to the course. He was cantered by Eddie Jim, then Eddie was taken off and another jockey put up for the gallop of a mile.

As Andrews handed this boy a five-dollar bill, he repeated his formula like a parrot: "You save this five-spot, boy, an' put it on Yellow 'Clipse fust time I start him, 'cause you'll get some real money."

There was nearly a week of this unusual method of training a horse. If Andrews hadn't been so patriarchal in appearance, suggesting dignified class, even strength, the boys would have gone beyond merely laughing at

him, because a pronounced mental inferiority invites persecution.

When the entries were out for the first day's races, the name of Yellow Eclipse was there in the fourth, a handicap of one mile. Yellow Eclipse was in at a hundred and ten pounds. This was rather surprising, for the weight ran down the scale to eighty-seven pounds, Cherokee being eighty-seven. Judging from what Yellow Eclipse had shown, bottom weight should have been the impost for the horse; but the handicapper, Dick Harpel, remembered Jack Andrews and his subtle ways, and he was not taking chances. Also his particular friend, the sheriff, had a horse in the handicap named Single Star. Harpel knew the form of every horse in the race except Yellow Eclipse, for the others made the circuit of the Texas tracks; so he had recourse to the Year Book, the racing calendar. He found that Yellow Eclipse, now a three-year-old, had started three times as a two-year-old and had not been in the money once. There was no record of him as a three-year-old, but still he might have started, even won half-a-dozen times at bush tracks—half-mile tracks.

Harpel knew the racing men would grin when they saw that he had allotted Andrew's horse one hundred and ten pounds, thinking it but a bit of humor. And then he chucked the sheriff's horse in with one hundred pounds, though he should have been given a hundred and twelve.

The morning of the handicap Yellow Eclipse appeared wearing blinkers, and as Andrews lifted Eddie Jim to the saddle he said:

"This hawse's in a race to-day, so all he gets is a nice amble. Take him down past the stand and wheel him

for once around at a gentle canter. When you turn into the stretch let him have 'is head for a sixteenth so's he'll know this afternoon where the finish post is. I put blinkers on him to-day to see if that'd make any dif'rence. You kinder watch how he runs in the stretch, son, for I'm goin' to ride you on him in the race."

Eddie Jim gasped. Of course it would be a fool mount, no chance of a win, but still it would be a mount in a race; ir would help.

When the horses were saddled for the fourth race in the afternoon, Andrews said to Eddie Jim:

"Now, son, you're on a hawse can't lose. There's seven hawses in the race, an' don't you worry 'bout none of 'em; get off when the flag drops; you won't have no trouble 'bout that, 'cause this hawse'll see it goin' down afore you do. That Single Star, he's a fas' breaker; so's Gray Eagle, an' if they head you, don't worry none. Don't ride him—I ain't give you no whip; jus' take a steadyin' hold of his head an' he'll do all the res'."

To the boy it was either pitiable or wondrous, either the old gray-whiskered man was senile, dotty, or he was deeper than the sands of the plains. And that morning Eddie Jim had felt a thrill as Yellow Eclipse had thundered up the stretch—galloped as he had out on the road the other day.

And now Andrews had taken from a coat pocket a roll of bills that was like a little pillow. Eddie Jim could see oval noughts on many of them—hundreds or thousands, he couldn't tell which. And Andrews was saying, "My hawse is a hundred-to-one, son, an' this is all goin' on him. An' fifty dollars of it is goin' on for you, Eddie Jim. To-morrow Doc Fisher'll send that

winnin's home to your ma, an' he'll write that it was got through Jack Andrews. I uster know your ma and pa."

There was a bugle note, and Andrews said, "Here you be, son."

He took the boy's ankle in his hand and lifted him to the saddle; his great bony hand was rubbed affectionately down the dun's neck.

"He's an hones' hawse, Eddie Jim, an' you're an hones' boy. There ain't nothin' goin' to beat you."

There was something attractive about the kindly old face of Jack Andrews, something that made Eddie Jim fond of him; but this talk about the dun winning was so like a dream; and to win five thousand dollars to send to his mother—that couldn't be, couldn't be true; things like that didn't happen, only in dreams.

As they went down the course past the stand for the start, Eddie Jim caught more than one supposed shaft of humor at the expense of the yellow horse. And Johnny Segeen, riding Single Star, ducked his head to call derisively, "Did you get your five dollars first, Eddie the jock?"

Down among the bookmakers a tall long-whiskered individual was elbowing his way in the crowd, and the bookmakers, recognizing Jack Andrews, the owner of the joke horse, were calling, "Here you are, Mr. Andrews! A hundred to one I'll lay you, Yellow Eclipse!"

And the Man from the Desert was accepting their offers, splitting up his bets—down the line rapidly, a hundred here, a hundred there, a hundred at the next stand. And a curious crowd was following the old patriarch, a ribald crowd, for the whisper that the old man was dotty had been passed.

At last all the great roll of bills was in the keeping of the bookmakers, and in an old leather wallet which Andrews buttoned in an inside pocket of his vest were the bookies' tickets calling for thousands, enough money if it came to paying to break the ring.

As Andrews passed back to the stand the horses had come back from the parade and were lined up for the start. Somebody at the old man's elbow was saying:

"That's funny—I see that yellow skate Eclipse workin' here every mornin', an' he got about as much fire in him as a dead codfish; but look at him now—he's on his toes, an' he's keener to be off than a jack rabbit when he sees a bear comin'."

"I guess the owner's got him primed," a companion suggested.

"If he has he's an artist, 'cause the hawse ain't gone loony an' he ain't sweatin', he's just ready."

There was no starting barrier in those days, and the horses broke away to a false start a dozen times. But suddenly a roar smothered individual voices, arose a clamor from tense throats; there was the beating scuffle of feet on planks; the flag in the starter's hands had swished down like a scimitar, and the second flag, fifty yards out, was down—it was a start.

Single Star, the bay, and Gray Eagle had been in a happy position when the starter fluttered his flag downward, and they shot to the front.

Eddie Jim found that Yellow Eclipse knew what to do; it seemed to creep up the reins to his sensitive fingers that the horse knew as he swung in behind the two that raced in front at the upper turn, pinching off a black so sharply that there was almost a collision. The stand, seeing the despised dun holding his own at this

terrific speed that was being cut out by the two in front, stared and called to one another in wonderment.

Where the telegraph instruments clicked and the press men sat, a voice was calling out: "The quarter in twenty-four! Single Star in front, a neck; Gray Eagle second; Yellow Eclipse third, half a length!"

Then down the back stretch the two leaders, bay and gray, fought, trying to kill each other off—the Texas way.

And to Eddie Jim had come revelation. Andrews was not a foolish old man having a pipe dream; the horse under him was a real horse; the boy felt that he could go to the front any time he wanted to. And now began a confidence in Andrews, who had said: "The hawse'll know—you ride him gentle, an' when you're comin' round to the stretch let 'Clipse pick his own way of comin' through—he'll come. If they don't go wide, an' there ain't much openin' on the rail, come round 'em."

How foolish that had all sounded to Eddie Jim. And now he knew it was true. Andrews had said that the horse could stay, that the farther they went the better he'd be. Yes, he would win!

"The half in forty-nine!" the voice announced.

"Something'll crack!" a man bellowed. "There ain't no hawse in Texas can live a mile at that bat."

Another said, "And that yaller, the joke hawse, is stayin' with it, an' the boy ain't moved on him yet—just ratin' him."

Around the lower turn Gray Eagle was seen to creep up on the bay, creep past him a neck, and at Single Star's tail nodded the dust-yellow head of Eclipse.

Into the stretch the battle of the jocks on Single Star and Gray Eagle carried their mounts wide; they

were racing too fast, battling too hard, to make the turn. And through the opening left on the rail came the dun, the despised Eclipse. Eddie Jim felt the surging strength under him, the wide gallop of the powerful quarters behind; the horse's lean ears were pricked straight ahead, and he still pushed with his teeth against the steel bit, asking for liberty.

A length he was in front, behind him whips slashing and cutting, horses scrambling without avail, horses that were tired, drained by the fierce speed.

Two lengths, three lengths! And thus past the judges' stand, Yellow Eclipse winning with ease!

Then Hades belched forth; not the glad cry for the victor, not words of praise for the boy; it was the roar of an angry mob that had been cheated, for nobody had bet on the joke horse—nobody but Andrews.

Men rushed across the lawn to gather in a riotous mob at the judges' stand, yelling, "Ringer! A ringer! A steal! Don't give him the race!"

Bookmakers swarmed out from their spider parlors, betting sheet in hand, calling, "It's was a killin'—a ringer! The hawse was bet off the boards with us!"

Jack Andrews had gone down to the course when Eddie Jim had turned and brought back Yellow Eclipse. Up in the judges' stand there was silence as the jockeys passed over the scales weighing in; and then, though the numbers of the three placed horses were up, the red board marked Official was not placed below.

"There's the old thief that put this over!" a man cried as Andrews, answering a call from the judges' stand, passed up the steps.

"You keep your hawse here for a little, Mr. Andrews," one of the stewards said: "we don' like the looks of this

race." In fact, a judge had already called down to a darky boy to keep Yellow Eclipse in the inclosure by the stand.

Another said to one of the assistant starters, "Go and bring Doc Stanley, the vet. We'll have this hawse examined for dope," he said to nobody in particular.

"We've got to protect the public, Mr. Andrews," a steward said, "and they think that your horse is a ringer, that Yellow Eclipse isn't his name."

"That's my hawse's true name, judge," Andrews retorted; "here's his registration, an' his marks an' his breedin'—he's by Himyar, whose grandsire was Imported Eclipse. That's why he's named Yellow Eclipse."

"Yes, the marks," the judge said; "brown stripes down the shoulders, dull chestnut color, white coronet on the left forefoot; age—should now be a three-year-old—examine his teeth, doc," he commanded the vet, who had come.

"He's three," the vet said as he peered into the horse's mouth.

"We still think there's something," the steward said. "You've been working Yellow Eclipse here on the course, half-a-dozen jocks have been up on him, and they couldn't belt him into better than a two-minute clip; now this race has been run in one-forty—that breaks the track record. What have you got to say to that, Mr. Andrews?"

"Jus' that you're mistook, judge. This hawse that's jus' run the mile in one-forty is Yellow Eclipse, same's I entered him, but he ain't never been on this track before this mornin', when I gave him a canter so's he'd kinder know it this afternoon."

"He ain't what?" the judge gasped.

"The hawse you see workin' here wasn't Yellow Eclipse; he's a hawse I picked up as a kind o' companion for Yellow Eclipse, 'cause his marks was jus' 'bout the same."

"What's that horse's name?"

"I ain't never called him anythin' but Bill, 'cause that's what the feller I bought him of called him."

"But he was known here as Yellow Eclipse."

"I guess the boys kinder got that from my sayin' I was goin' to win fust time I started Yellow Eclipse—they thought I meant Bill; but Lor', he couldn't win no race!"

The stewards drew to one side and held a consultation. Then one said: "Where is this other horse? You've got to produce him immediately, Mr. Andrews."

"Won't take more'n a minute, sir, 'cause I bought him as comp'ny for Yellow 'Clipse; he's down in the stall now."

When Bill was brought onto the track and placed alongside Yellow Eclipse it became apparent that he was an impostor, and not Yellow Eclipse. He had a white star in his forehead, and Eclipse had not, and it was not in his registered marks; and he lacked the white coronet on the forefoot that Yellow Eclipse had when he was registered; Bill had a brown streak down his backbone which was lacking on Eclipse; and Bill's teeth indicated that he was old enough to know a thing or two.

The stewards went back up into the stand, and presently Jack Andrews was called once more before them.

The presiding steward said, "Mr. Andrews, you have demonstrated that racing in Texas is yet in its infancy, but we have decided that there are not sufficient

grounds for us to take away from you the race your horse has just won."

The speaker waved an arm upward from the front of the stand and the red Official board was shot into place below the numbers of the placed horses.

"Now, Mr. Andrews," the steward resumed, holding out a hand, "I wish you good-by, and a successful trip to whichever of the tracks in the East you are about to take Yellow Eclipse and Bill." There was a gentle emphasis on the name Bill.

The two other stewards stepped forward and solemnly shook hands with the Man from the Desert; so did the judge and the placing judge.

"I kinder thought of pullin' out soon's I'd collected, gentlemen," the patriarch answered, "'cause I guess the books ain't got much lef'."

Phonetic Finance

STEWART OWEN swept the rotunda of the King James with his luminous, black eyes. The place buzzed like a beehive, the open space of the lounge above echoing back a heavy drone of amalgamated voices, for it was race week, and it had brought an influx of sporting gentlemen.

Owen was on financial intent—prospecting for a capitalist. Times had been with Owen when Toronto was easy for a touch, even a heavy-handed touch, running into thousands, but the cards were not falling his way now. The lawsuit over the Utility Steel Company had taken its tithe.

“Well, look who’s here!” a voice at his elbow exclaimed, a voice that rather declaimed the words, suggesting, somewhat, the stilted enunciation of the stage.

Whirling, Owen saw a rather dressy man and an ultra-dressed girl.

“Why, Corson! How are you, Ralph, old boy?” and Owen’s muscular hand almost crushed the slim fingers of the other.

“I’m in the purple, Stewart. Let me introduce Miss Delane. We’re at the Royal, in ‘Shadows,’ ” he continued.

“A box for me,” Owen declared, his boyish laugh showing superb teeth. “Miss Delane, if you see a peck

of orchids floating from a box to your little feet, they'll be from—my wife, Delilah."

Corson chuckled. "Miss Vida, what do you think of him? Same old jollier; and when the orchids float you can fall to wondering where Mrs. Owen is that evening."

"Make it to-night," Miss Delane suggested.

"Can you manage it, Owen—slip away?" Corson queried. "We've got a little revival meeting on. This is the anniversary of the universe, birthday of old Thesp; a little supper, and, afterwards, perhaps a wee game of draw."

Owen's soul watered. The difficult matter of convincing Delilah that he had a late sitting at the club with the Utility Steel fellows might be managed, for practice had made him a sometimes winner over Delilah in diplomacy, but he was broke; what money the Owens had was banked in his wife's name.

"I'm tremendously busy, Corson," he said, speaking with half his thinking capacity on his stalling, and the other half toying with prospects.

"Racing, or mines?" Corson asked.

By Jove! Corson had furnished the magic word, the thought starter, "racing."

Owen grinned. "Partly the ponies, I'll admit."

"What's the good thing to-day?" Corson asked. "Is that old side-kick of yours, the Man from the Desert, here with a string? He could tap on the rock and strike oil any old time, as I remember."

"Yes, Jack Andrews is here; and there's a skate starting to-day that, if they were shooting with him, it's a dead bird."

"Well, old alkali Andrews will know," Corson declared.

"Are you going down to the Grapevine Course, Ralph?" Owen queried; and Corson failed to see the intense concentration so evident in the boyish eyes.

"I can't—sorry, too. There's a matinee on. What's the horse, Owen? I suppose I can get a bet down in town."

"I'll find out," Owen declared. "I'll have a talk with Jack Andrews."

"Good stuff! We're going up to our rooms, and I'll meet you here on the floor in an hour."

On their floor Miss Delane said, "Isn't he handsome?—he's a dear!"

"Yes," Corson drawled, "he's dear—comes high, Vida."

"Don't worry, Ralph—I'm not interested."

"You'll find it interesting if Delilah catches you—she's all the hot-point women of history rolled into one—and clever—phew!"

"But, Ralph, why is a party—? I hadn't heard about to-night's revel."

"We always have supper after we've jumped through the hoop; well, to-night it's plus Owen. He's a gambling kid, and I've got tucked away in a box of antiques his I.O.U. for two hundred iron men."

"I see," Vida murmured; "heads you win, tails Owen loses."

"Yes; you're brilliant; if your dear has chips to cash in I'll slip him his I.O.U. in settlement."

Below Owen was on a still-hunt for the Man from the Desert. A curious bit of racing information he

wanted from Andrews; not a winner, but a loser—absolutely a dead un.

Corson was a man bearing gifts. Owen knew he couldn't get a bet down in town—that was a cinch, for the Racing Association paid a big tax to the Government in a percentage on the betting at the course, and the authorities would see to it that the handbook men in town were taking a rest. Even then Stewart could see two plain-clothes men, detectives, standing nonchalantly about, their lazy-looking eyes keenly alert for a touch of business in the betting line.

Then he saw old Jack—easy to flag with his spread of gray alfalfa, and his wide-brimmed gray hat.

"Want to see you a minute, Andrews," Owen said, as he slipped a hand through the other's arm. "Let's trot up to the lounge."

Seated on a sofa he asked, running his eyes over a racing form, "What'll win the fifth race, Andrews?"

The Man from the Desert stretched his long arm, and taking the form from Owen's hand, ran his eye over the eight horses entered.

"Well," he said, presently, "they're a bad lot, no form to speak of; Servitor might get it."

"I got a tip on one."

"Of course you did, Owen; and if you keep goin' you'll get a tip on eight—on every starter."

"But the *Racing Form* calls this one to win," Owen objected—"some of its tipsters do, I mean."

"What hoss?"

"Gaff."

With a drawl of weariness Andrews passed the form back to Owen, saying: "Well, you must 've picked out a bright tout, 'cause you've got the only one as I would

say hadn't a chance. Did your information man suggest that you let him bet your money?"

Owen grinned. "Quit ticklin', Jack. What's the matter with Gaff? He was pretty slippery a year or so ago."

"So was I, Stewart, about forty years ago. Gaff's not ready; kind of think his feet's under suspicion. This track's hard as a pawnbroker's heart, and they ain't been able to give him enough work; he ain't keyed up for a race, nohow, Owen. You can just write him off—throw him in the discard. If it was mud, or a track with a cushion to it, he might do; he's got the speed, and if his feet didn't heat up on him, he might come home—but he won't. His owner won't bet a nickel on him to-day, not a nickel. And they won't let him scratch out, 'cause he can't bring up no fresh excuse, an' there ain't a big bunch of hosses startin'."

"Well, that's that, then," Owen commented. "You like Servitor?"

"I don't like nothin'. It's a good race to leave alone—anythin' might win outside the hoss you've picked. Guess I'll go an' comb out my whiskers."

Andrews took the elevator up. And Owen chuckled. Things were dovetailing into each other. He ran blithely down the marble stairs to wait for the man with the golden cup. Compared with Delilah, Corson was easy.

When Corson had suggested the frisk-away for the evening, Owen had at once been filled with the tremendous query of how he could wheedle Delilah out of a hundred dollars. Now he wouldn't have to. He would get Corson to use him as vicar to bet a hundred at the course, and on Gaff that hadn't a chance. He would

simply hold out the money—not bet it at all. It was an old tout game, but, under the present conditions, Corson would not be the least bit suspicious.

There was something delightfully humorous about it, too; Corson's party, and make Corson furnish the stake for the game of poker. And it hadn't much of an ethical tangent either; the actor was a man who would sell anybody a sparrow as a canary; he had a fantastic morality as pliable as a rubber band.

And Owen was an extraordinary product of the West—Spokane, he understood, had been his birth place; but this was not very clear—almost legendary, for his father had been a drifter, and Stewart a bit of flotsam that drifted with him. He had never grown up—never would—that is, in an academically mental conception of conventional morality—its politic necessity. It was as if nature, not wishing to tip the scales, had left him with his superb physical charms as being sufficiently gifted. His boy's laugh, his generous personality, almost made his buccaneering something to be taken as a grim touch of humor.

Sharp on time Corson stepped from the elevator, and Owen, with a lithe swing from his chair, said, "Let's get a smoke, Ralph."

With a smile, the man behind the counter put up a box of expensive cigars, opened it, then dropped it back into the glass case, and said: "Wait till I get out a fresh box, Mr. Owen—you like them off the top."

Owen took four, passing two to Corson. Then he leaned over the glass case and asked, "Seen Silent Sam about, Tom?"

"No; none of the fellers are here; you'll see them all down at the course backing the horses themselves.

There's too many dicks about," and Tom's gray eyes indicated one of the detectives, who was leaning carelessly against the telegraph counter.

As Owen moved away, followed by Corson, he said: "You can't get a bet on in town to-day."

"Let's go up to the lounge—I told Miss Delane I'd wait there for her," Corson suggested.

They found a seat on a sofa by the elevator, and as if the betting matter were closed out Owen talked of his own affairs. He knew about that I.O.U. just as well as Corson did—hadn't forgotten it; also he surmised that Corson would say, "You bet a hundred for me, Stewart, and if it loses I'll pay you." Yes, that would be the actor's debonnaire proposition. And what Owen wanted was a hundred cash from Corson, of which not a penny would go on Gaff; he'd hold it out.

Owen explained that he had had a big lawsuit over Utility Steel, and, for fear things might go against him, had put what money he had in his wife's name—it was all banked in her name. He told this with a laugh to explain why he was going to bet but two hundred on Gaff, the good thing, himself.

Corson had been rather wondering as to Owen's financial condition. He had noticed that the big blue-white diamonds Owen had sported when he knew him before, were not in evidence; undoubtedly they had been hocked. Corson was sorry for this—it took away a leverage, a backing for a request for a liquidation of that I.O.U.

But Owen was optimistic; in a month he would be rolling in wealth. The very essence of his existence was swank, a seeming affluence; and he was trying to preserve that atmosphere, and yet make it the most natural thing

in the world that he hadn't a hundred dollars for Corson to play with or lay his hands on. In this he had forestalled Corson, for the latter had been going to propose that Owen bet the money for him—had it all thought out. He would say, "My salary for four weeks is in the hands of the manager—haven't drawn it—won't till we get back to New York; so I'd have to go down to the theatre to get a hundred."

But almost immediately that very formula of deceit came pat, for Owen was saying:

"It doesn't make any difference about the handbook, for I couldn't advise you to bet till just before the race. The old man says Gaff can win in a walk if he's in good shape, and he's going to find out for me. If Andrews says shoot, I'm going to play Gaff; if he says there's nothing doing, I'm going to throw in my hand."

"Damn the luck!" Corson exclaimed; "I'd like to have a flutter on that horse if he wins. What price will he be?"

"About five to one, perhaps."

Corson's brows wrinkled; his face carried a hungry look; his eyes narrowed in cupidity: "Five hundred bucks," he murmured regretfully.

Owen looked at him thoughtfully. It was the psychological moment to play his ace; it might come off—at any rate he had nothing to lose.

"If you are keen about it, Ralph," he said, "I'll take your money down and bet it with mine—it won't be any trouble to me. It's the only way you'll be safe."

But Corson was ready—no stammering hesitation, for he had been all over this, mentally, before. He told Owen all about the apocryphal salary in the hands of

the manager, and flashed a small roll of ten or twenty dollars as the extent of his pocket wealth.

It was courteous rapier play on the part of both. Owen didn't believe the yarn a little bit; he knew how facile Corson was in saying what he didn't mean. He cursed inwardly.

"By Jove! I've thought of something," Corson said, suddenly; "what times does that horse start, Stewart?"

"He's in the fifth race—about five o'clock."

Corson made a mental computation of time, then he declared: "I can get to the course by four-thirty. I'm on in the first act only. I can get my make-up off, change, hop a taxi at the theatre, and get to the course by four-thirty. I'll get the money at the theatre, and everything will be jake. Where shall I find you, Stewart?"

"I'll be in the Club Enclosure—perhaps in the paddock."

"I'll have heaps of time. I'll see you, and if it's O.K. we'll get the needful. If Gaff wins I'll blow the party to wine to-night."

"Hello, D'Artagnan," a cheery, gentle voice greeted.

It was Vida Delane, swinging around at their backs as she came from the elevator. She sat down on the sofa beside Owen, and tapping his knee with her hand-bag, asked: "You're coming to our party to-night, big boy, aren't you?"

"I'll be there with bells on, Miss Vida, and—"

He checked; his fascinating smile died a premature death; for a slender Spanish-looking girl circled the seat, and was gazing at Owen out of big black soulful eyes—but the eyes were mirroring a soul in eruption.

Owen sprang to his feet, saying: "Hello, Delilah!

This is Miss Delane; and Corson—you remember him in Spokane?"

Delilah favored Vida with a glance *frappe*, bowed, and held out a slim hand to Corson.

"Your husband is tempting me—the races," Corson said.

"Are you going, too, Miss Delane?" Delilah asked sweetly.

"Miss Vida can't get off—she's booked for the afternoon, but I'm going to manage a break-away," Corson informed. "We'll have to toddle along now, too—sorry. We're playing at the Royal, you know, Mrs. Owen."

"Ah! then I'll see you to-night. Go down, Stewart, right away and get seats, before they are all gone." And the face that was so like Cleopatra's held nothing but just a pleased, satisfied expression.

Delilah saw, from between her drooping eyelids, Vida wince; she saw Corson stiffen his shoulders against the lounge back; she saw a little cloud flit across Stewart's handsome face, and inwardly she chuckled. She had heard all right as she approached at their backs—there was something doing. Of course there would be with the susceptible Stewart, and a girl like Vida available.

"Can't make the grade, Lilah. I've got a date with Bolton at the club, to talk Utility Steel," Owen protested; and he winked at Corson.

Delilah knew Stewart had winked—she didn't see it, she just knew, being a woman who was always on edge, receptive to static.

"Well, Vida, we've got to trot," Corson said, rising. "Deuced sorry you can't see the play to-night, Owen; it isn't top-hole, but not bad."

When they had gone Delilah sat drawing her gloves

through one hand. Owen knew that something was agitating the good lady. This was too bad for, having failed to get the hundred from Corson, he would have to do some missionary work with Delilah. He was wondering if she had heard Vida's reference to the night's engagement. He had a shrewd suspicion that she had; the sudden idea of the theatre seats suggested this—looked as if Delilah had wished herself in on the party. However, the hundred was the thing for the present.

He drew a small roll of bills from his pocket, looked them over, and announced: "I've only got thirty bucks, Lilah, and I want to bet a hundred on Gaff to-day—he's a cinch, and he'll be five to one; I need that half-grand I'd win."

"The hotel bill's up on the writing table, Stewart; why haven't you paid that?" his wife asked.

"With what? You've got my roll—it's banked in your name."

"*Your* roll, Tootie? *My* roll—yours has blown long ago."

"Well, I rustled it, gave you half; that was to keep it out of the hands of the sharks."

"Sharks is good; they got your money—it was like taking candy from a kid."

"Lilah, slip me a hundred bones; I'll hand it back to-night when Gaff wins, and I'll pay the hotel bill."

"Get it from Vida—she must draw down a good salary."

"Cut that stuff out, Lilah; I never met her till to-day."

"Long enough for you, Tootie—you're a fast worker."

"Give me a cheque, Lilah; it's business. I can cop five hundred on Gaff. Andrews says he can run away off from the bunch he's in with."

"Get it out of the steel deal," Delilah suggested.

"Ask for a hundred—show my hand? Say, Lilah, if that bunch thought I was up against it they'd appeal the decision I got against them; they'd wear me down."

"Bolton would lend you a hundred, Stewart."

"I know he would; *you* know why, Lilah—you know just why that fish would lend me money."

Under Owen's eyes Delilah's face flushed scarlet. "Tootie, you're a beast! You're in Vida's class!" she declared passionately. "If any man looks at me you weigh him in your own scales."

"How well do you know that guy, Lilah?"

"The president of Utility, Bolton."

"Yes—that fat-head."

"I've seen him eat—that's about the limit of my acquaintance with him."

"You don't know him, but you check me up when I tell you what he's like. Some day I want to take a punch at that fat-head. If I borrow his money I can't do it—see? You've got all your rocks—I ain't asked you to hock a ring, and mine is in soak; now when I want a hundred, you put the shutters up."

Delilah hesitated; what Stewart had said was true; he had given her diamonds when he was flush; and she, with an Orientalism that was inherent, lavished them upon her long, tapering fingers, and her olive-hued neck. Ordinarily a hundred dollars had meant little in their prodigal life; perhaps a dinner for two or three friends. Owen had been born with a slow developing silver spoon in his mouth—boyhood days of Bedouin life—selling

newspapers, page in a hotel—just the life to educate him in the unlettered lore of humanity.

But from the time Owen had appeared to Delilah, a gorgeous, modern knight, as she stood behind a counter in a departmental store, and had trotted her—(that's what he called it) before a minister, up to three months before, the silver spoon had dipped gold. A mine deal, an acquaintanceship with a millionaire, due to Owen's man-boy enticing manner, had netted a hundred thousand dollars. Luck, he couldn't go wrong; he knew perfectly well it would last forever.

And now here they were, the tailings of all the luck mine's output, two thousand dollars at Delilah's credit in the bank; and Owen trying to wheedle her out of a hundred.

It was not until they were down at the race course that Owen succeeded in his laudable endeavor.

It was a bright May afternoon; beyond the course, like far-up stage scenery, Lake Ontario lay like a huge blue Wilton rug, stretching away to a rose-tinted wall that was the horizon. And between the homestretch of the course, and where Stewart and Delilah sat in the Club stand, was a garden of gorgeous animated flowers, flowers that, as if driven by the gentle breeze volitated hither and yon in and out, laughing and chatting, twirling parasols of brilliant hue; women, flower-like, their eyes sparkling with a half subdued excitement, the exhilarating stimulus of combat between the most superb creatures on earth—thoroughbreds; and, like caviare, a bet, a gamble, a tempting of chance.

Men, too, had left their business poker-faces in office, and were whole-souled, well-met humans; unbending to ask even a clerk, or a man of slim bank account, what he

thought would win the Cup—the huge gold vase that stood on a stand on the club lawn.

Where the lawn, another rug of deep green, was cut by a white picket fence, began the paddock; and in a circus-like ring blood-bay, and chestnut, and black thoroughbreds circled with lissome stride. Sometimes a bay would throw his head up, cock his tapering ears, and peer out across the course with big, wondering eyes. Once a black, idle mischief in his heart, stretched his lean, sinewy neck, and nipped the darkey boy who led him; a nervous chestnut filly checked her mincing steps, whirled her quarters toward the ring rail, and lashed out as a boxer sends in a right and left. There was a mad scurry from the rail of those who leaned over it, and a thrill of horror, for a clip of those iron-plated hoofs would have lifted the top of a skull.

To the left of the Club Enclosure stretched away a human sea, thirty thousand heads, all that was visible, for the figures were massed so close that it was a wall. Delilah, looking across this packed humanity, had a curious idea that it was like a stretch of seashore she had seen on the Pacific—a cove paved by round, dark boulders.

“Well, Lilah,” Owen was saying, “to-day I’m a piker.”

“It’ll be a change, Stewart; you’ll find it refreshing. Piker’s sometimes run a shoe-string into a block of buildings.”

“If I had a thousand on Gaff to-day I could start a hot-dog stand at least.”

“If he won, Tootie. If Gaff knew you had a thousand on him he’d wheel and run the other way.”

“Knock as much as you like, Lilah; as I won’t be

betting him it won't cut any ice." Owen grinned good naturedly, although in his voice was a rasp of regret.

Delilah caught this, and she asked: "Do you think he'll sure win—is your info. straight, or is it just another tout stringing you?"

"Andrews ought to know."

"He ought, and sometimes does. Does the old man think Gaff will win?"

"Jack says that Gaff could beat the bunch he's in with a hundred yards."

Now, Owen had stated a half-truth, wisely considering his purpose, omitting to say anything about the horse's condition.

Delilah unclasped her handbag, drew forth ten bank notes, and said, "Stewart, here's the hundred bones you're weeping for, and it's for a set purpose—get me, to bet on Gaff?"

Owen winced under the piercing gaze of Delilah's Spanish eyes. Did she suspect?

Then she added, as if in apology for yielding: "I might as well give it to you—it's like betting it myself. I'd have to pay those bills anyway, and if you win you can square up."

"Good girl, Lilah," and Owen patted his wife's hand. "I'll have five hundred bucks to the good after the fifth race. I'm doing this just to save eating up your pile."

Delilah laughed. "Tootie, as the considerate one you're droll; got to take care of little wife, eh, boy?"

"Haven't I always done it, Lilah?"

"When you couldn't escape."

Owen ran his fingers over Delilah's blazing rings, as if he played a prelude on ivory keys; then a broad grin bared his white teeth, and he winked.

"Yes, Stewart, and they'll stay there. Perhaps some day they'll be needed for bail."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't Bolton threaten a criminal suit if you didn't settle over Utility?"

"Damn Bolton! He's just a fat-headed bluffer—thinks I'm pinched for the ready. That punch is coming to him sure."

"I'll pay your fine."

"That's right, girl—has he been making a play?"

"Well, when you've got the deal all sewed up you go as far as you like."

Owen touched Delilah's cheek with his fingers. "Some class, Lilah. Now me for a piking bet on Little Maud in this race; let me see—I've got thirty bucks plus the Gaff money—four races with a five spot on each. You've made me feel lucky, too, girl. If I run it up to a betting stake I'll hand you back the hundred before Gaff starts. Want me to put a bet down for you?"

"No, I'm betting a hundred now on you; that's gamble enough for me in one day. Besides, we need the money."

Delilah didn't see much of Owen for the next hour or so. He was busy; but the busier he became the harder luck ran against him. He seemed to have arrived at the perihelion of picking losers. For four races his choice went down, and the worst of it was, that he couldn't recoup on Gaff, for he had no intention of playing the horse. Perhaps he'd put his last ten spot on Servitor in the fifth; that was the horse Andrews had said might win.

After the fourth race he went up into the Club to sit with Delilah in the way of keeping in her mind the

fact that his coup was about to come off. It was, in a way, of speaking, for this time he certainly had a sure thing for a hundred.

"Now, girl," he said, as he saw the horses for the fifth race in the merry-go-round of the paddock, "I'll go down and put in my bet on Gaff early, so I won't get shut out."

Owen had another reason for leaving his seat beside Delilah: Corson was likely to arrive about that time, and Owen did not want to see him. He was in a slight dilemma; he was irritated over Corson's evident distrust of him, but it would be rather a cold-blooded caper to advise his actor friend to bet on the useless Gaff; and if he advised Corson that he wasn't betting on Gaff himself Corson might mention this to Delilah. Down in the crowd he could avoid Corson, but sitting there beside Delilah he would be easily discovered from the lawn.

At just about that time Corson had dashed up to the gate in a taxi, and, just within, stopped to buy a programme from the man in a small wooden stall.

"What's the next race?" Corson asked, as he pocketed his change.

"The fifth, sir. The horses'll be goin' out in five minutes."

"The fifth?" Corson drew a watch from his pocket and looked at it. "It's not four-thirty yet, and I understood the fifth race was at five o'clock—it must be the fourth."

"No, sir—it's the fifth. You see, sir, they're half-an-hour earlier to-day. Through the week the first race started at three o'clock, but to-day, being Saturday, with a great crowd, an' it bein' Cup Day, an' all, they started at two-thirty."

"Hell! I mean, thank you," and Corson, realizing that he must get hold of Owen at once to be in time to bet, darted to the lawn, and with eyes alert for the tall, handsome husband of Delilah, wove in and out the maze of wheeling, cross-cutting, hurrying people.

He carried on to the little white picket fence and gazed across the paddock. He could see that it was emptying—men were hurrying into the Club Enclosure to bet; the horses were now in their stalls, and standing beside them were the silk-jacketed boys, the jockeys, ready to mount.

Cursing the stupidity of Owen in having mixed the time, he fairly ran across the club lawn. And as he ran, casting his eyes up into the stand, he saw Delilah, looking somewhat as if Cleopatra sat there on a dais.

Corson ran up the steps, asking: "Where's Stewart, Mrs. Owen?"

"He's gone down to bet," she replied.

"Ah! could you tell me what he's betting on in this race?"

"Gaff."

"Thanks."

"You'll have to hurry if you're going to bet," Delilah advised; but Corson was gone—racing down the steps.

He whirled in under the stand to the betting room, bumping his way against, and through the tide of human flood that was surging up the steps to the lawn. He saw, with a grim glance, that but two men were at the fifty dollar wicket, and a white card with black letters "closed" had been stood up to bar the twenty dollar window.

He was in a state of frantic trepidation; to miss by,

perhaps a second of time, five hundred dollars, would be one of Fate's curious twists. And the man in front of him—now the last, was a mudhead. He shoved back the ticket he had bought on Servitor to win, wanting it changed for a ticket on place, Servitor to be second.

At the ticket seller's elbow stood a man with a "closed" card in his hand, saying, "Hurry up—that's all—no more, no more!" But Corson had pushed a hundred dollar bill under the arm of the man of indecision, a coaxing tone to his voice as he said, "Two tickets on Gaff, to win, please—don't close me out."

The seller's ears were resounding to the words of three men; his mind was assailed by three different propositions, and the Servitor man fussed. But Corson's request appealed in its simplicity. He raked the hundred dollar bill into a till, and picking up two tickets from the compartmented tray shoved them out to Corson's eager fingers. It was a subconscious move, for he was saying to the other man, "What is it you want—do you know—you got your ticket on Servitor?"

But Corson, with a breath of relief, rushed out to see the race. Of course, now that he didn't need him, almost the first man he saw was Owen.

"Hello, Stewart!" he gasped, for he was still puffing over his haste. "By Jove! but you're a pink-eyed horologist."

"Eh—what? What's a horlogger—a con man?" and into Owen's mind crept a suspicion that Corson had found out something.

"A horologist is a time-sharp, a man that gives time the once-over, and you're a he-bird at it. You've given me one hell of a run for it—you said this race started at five, and it goes at four-thirty. I just got here."

"I didn't know that it was starting at two-thirty to-day. You're too late; but perhaps it's just as well—perhaps you've saved your money."

Corson looked at Owen out of startled eyes. "What's wrong—I've bet a hundred on Gaff?"

"You got on, eh?" Owen queried.

"Yes—isn't Gaff good?"

"I told you not to bet till you saw me here—"

"Saw you—that's good; and I had three minutes to find you in this crowd. Didn't you bet on Gaff? Mrs. Owen said you did; that's why I played him."

"I bet a hundred, but I was going to bet two hundred, or perhaps five. But I guess it's all right. He can beat these horses a city block if he's in the pink. Andrews—he's a cautious old duck—is afraid that his feet may bother him on this hard track. If you'd sent the hundred down with me I wouldn't have bet it. I'd sometimes draw to a four-flush myself, but I wouldn't advise a friend to do it, see?"

Corson's face took on a gloomy look.

If Owen had seen Corson in time he probably would have kept him off the bet, but now he wasn't worrying about it. Of course if Corson had handed him the hundred he would have kept it, but Corson had distrusted him, and had made it quite evident. The loss was coming to Corson, he, Stewart, should worry. Corson was now more or less of a nuisance in a racing way, for Owen had been forced to get the money from Delilah.

Owen pointed to the probable odds board behind the judges' stand. "Gaff's five to one," he said, "and if it wasn't for this whisper that he's not fit, he'd be at

two's, or even money. We win something worth while if he wins—"

"If he wins; I don't want to do any betting on ifs."

"There ought to be an If written in front of every horse's name in every race," Owen retorted; "there ain't any sure things; if there was there'd be no racing."

"But Stewart, you said Gaff was a cinch."

"I didn't: I told you I'd tell you just before the race, and you never asked me. You've just got the same chance as I have. There come the horses," Stewart added, as the eight thoroughbreds passed the paddock gate and came down past the stand in Indian file.

"That's Gaff, number six," Corson said, as his eyes travelled from the jockey board across the course to the saddlecloth of a big bay. "He looks good, Owen."

"He looks good to me. Perhaps Andrews made a mistake about his condition; they may have been working him when the old man wasn't here. He's got speed to burn, that horse has. If it had rained, and there was a cushion to the track, it would be a cinch, but the course has been like a paved street."

The horses had wheeled down the course, and were now lined up at the barrier, just below the judges' stand, for the race was one mile and a sixteenth.

Corson, glass levelled on the thoroughbreds, was inwardly cursing Owen. What a stupid ass the man was, mixing up the race-time like that; but it was so like the devilishly happy-go-lucky fool. He should have known better than to get mixed up in any of Owen's good things; if he had heard that Gaff was not a sure-enough winner he wouldn't have bet a cent on him. And Owen was satisfied with the alibi he had built up for Gaff's lack of winning ability. Corson could think what he liked, but

he couldn't say that Owen had deliberately thrown him down.

"There they go—they're off!" the roar of many voices drove the irritating thoughts from Corson's mind.

The starting web had shot up, the eight thoroughbreds had burst into speed like a flock of startled sheep; there was the thunder of their pounding hoofs; the swirling by of a gaudy cloud of fluttering silks; at the upper turn arms rose and fell as the jockeys' whips cut at the flanks of their mounts in a mad race for position, for a berth next the rail, in front.

Women and men scrambled to stand on benches on the lawn, and Owen, clutching Corson by the arm commanded, "Let's hop to a bench to watch this—the club steps are packed."

"Gaff's in front!" Corson said, as he levelled his glasses on the steeds racing down the back stretch. "Six Yes, that's Gaff. Oh, you boy, you! His jock's sitting still, too, Owen. By gad! He's some little old mover that. He's a length to the good, and going strong!"

He dropped his glasses to gaze on Owen, a smile on his lips: "I guess it would have been bad luck if I'd given you that hundred and you hadn't bet it, old man."

"Looks like it," Owen commented dryly.

"You can bet that stuff about sore feet was just a stall to steer the public off to get a price against him. If I like a horse, and I hear the knock from everybody, I go to it double. They can't put me away, Stewart; I've played the ponies from New York to 'Friscø. It's a hunch, my just making it. I promised that taxi man a tip of two dollars if he'd step on the gas. We'll just turn on the light to-night, old man; that business

engagement of yours will be a hot time in the old town to-night. Two lengths, Owen!" Corson cried, beneath his levelled glasses, as the eight thoroughbreds swung around to the lower turn.

They were crowding up now; behind the two leaders Gaff and a brown, raced a bunch of four, lapped on each other; a length away was a black, Devonite; and trailing, a chestnut mare, her jockey placid in the knowledge that his mount wouldn't do, not good enough.

As the horses lay flat against the lower end, Corson asked, "What's that brown, second, Owen? He's creeping up?"

"The favorite, Servitor."

"His jockey's going to the bat," Corson advised; "he won't do."

"Don't know about that—he's a sluggish horse, and the harder they belt him the faster he'll run—he's game."

"Ah, you Gaff! Come on, you club-foot. D'you see that Owen?—the boy eased him back at the turn, and then lay him flat against the rail, and he's out in front, just winging. He doesn't need a manicure, Owen, old top, he's got his spiked running shoes on. We'll have five hundred of velvet each to-night for our little game of draw; we'll raise the limit to five dollars, eh, boy?"

"That's right"; and inwardly Owen muttered, "minus four hundred—I'll have a hundred, and that will about let us out."

But through his own glasses Owen could see a blood-bay that was Gaff well clear of the brown, lapped on whose quarter was a big bay, and the boy on Gaff had not made a move. He was crouched, just a little something in old gold with a crimson cap.

Owen felt a depressing doubt creeping over him;

would the horse, roused by the fury of combat, keep up that tireless swinging stride—would he win after all, and he with not a penny on? Would his clever scheme turn into a mocking something that he had missed? And if Corson won five hundred, his devilish effusiveness would rankle. Corson was like that, up in the air when things were coming his way, but a whiner when matters were going against him.

Once Owen muttered, "By Jove!"

"Isn't it great, Stewart—Gaff wins in a walk!" Corson cried.

"Look at the brown," Owen commanded; "he's coming, coming."

Corson shifted his eyes for a second to gaze at the speaker; there was absolutely a touch of elation in his voice.

And then back to the struggling thoroughbreds. His heart went down a foot; the brown was lapped on Gaff, and Gaff was shortening his stride, surely he was. The little mannikin in old gold had raised from his crouch along the horse's neck, and had gone to the whip. He could hear cries of "The favorite wins!" "Come on you, Servitor!"

The air resounded with the acclaim of the many who had wagered on the favorite; women were jumping up and down on the benches, beating the air with their programmes; one shrill-voiced woman was screaming, "Servitor! Servitor! Servitor!"

And now the brown had headed Gaff; he was a neck in front. But outside of the brown a big bay had come up out of the ruck, had come up from nowhere; and was galloping like a wild horse, eating up the lead of the brown at every stride. Now he was at his saddle girth;

two seconds, and he was at his throat latch; for a hundred feet the brown head of Servitor and the bay head of the outsider rose and fell together.

A bull-voiced man just down on the lawn bellowed: "The favorite's beat! the other one gets it!"

Somebody queried, "What horse is that?"

Nobody answered, nobody knew—just an outsider.

Then the judges' stand blotted the leading horses out, and they flashed into view again past the finish.

"Number one won," Owen said.

Corson dropped his glasses into the leather case, a frown on his face. "And number six, our good thing, is down the course, as they say in England," he growled.

There was a little silent wait, the vociferous mob was stilled, hushed by the calamity of the beaten favorite. Then across the course the numbers of the first three horses were slid into place.

"1, 8, 4," Owen read; he consulted his programme; "Gath, Servitor, Devonite."

"The good thing blew, Owen," Corson said bitterly.

"He'd have won if it hadn't been for his feet," Stewart declared, sticking to his alibi, though he knew nothing about Gaff's feet.

"You're right, Owen, his feet beat him, naturally; it's with their feet that horses win or lose."

Corson drew the two fifty dollar tickets from his vest pocket. "A hundred bucks—a hundred bucks of wise money! Owen, you're some picker: allow me to present you with these as souvenirs of your acumen in picking a horse with fallen arches."

Owen put the tickets in his vest pocket, and said, "I'll paste them in my hat, Corson, as a reminder not to try and do a friend a good turn."

"Quite so," Corson retorted; "and also to get the good turn straight next time."

During the race, Andrews, seeing Deililah sitting alone, had gone up the steps to take Owen's seat. As the horses flashed past the post Delilah said: "There goes another hundred dollars of Stewart's money, Mr. Andrews."

"Servitor?" he queried.

"No; Stewart backed Gaff."

"What—he must be crazy. I told him the horse hadn't a chance."

"Are you sure that he understood you?"

"Sure he did. Guess that tout got the loan of him again, and stung him. Owen is too easy led—these crooks is always stringin' him. Well, I'll shuffle along to the paddock."

"So, Mr. Tootie," Delilah mused, as the Man from the Desert was lost in the crowd. "I didn't think you were deep enough for that. Sorted out a dead one, and you've got my hundred in your pocket now. Vida, eh!"

Her analysis of motive was interrupted by the coming of Owen, a doleful look on his face, a sickly smile on his lips as though he were trying to bear up under his loss.

"It went wrong, Lilah," he said despondently.

"What went wrong—Vida?"

"Say, Lilah, are we at a horse race, or a fox-trot? Gaff was beaten—didn't you know that?"

"Did you bet on Gaff, Stewart?"

"Sure thing!" He dipped a finger and thumb into his vest pocket, and handed her the oblong strips of pasteboard "here 're the tickets—two fifties on Gaff."

As Delilah compared the numbers on the tickets with the numbers on her programme, she gave a start; then

she slipped them into her handbag, saying, "I'll keep them, and when you ask again for a hundred I'll return them."

"I'm sorry, Lilah; I did it for the best."

"You always do—best for yourself."

"Oh, don't rub it in, girl; I feel blue enough over it. I'll come back when you get in a better humor."

As Owen clattered down the steps he chuckled. The tickets on Gaff that Corson had so captiously bestowed upon him had been a most happy thing; they had convinced the suspicious Delilah, and he had the hundred dollars in his pocket. The party was surely on.

When Owen had gone, Delilah drew forth the tickets, and read the numbers: 4815, and *Gaff's* number was 4813; the 4815 stood opposite the name of *Gath*, and Gath had won. There were his odds now on the board, forty-two dollars for a two-dollar ticket: the two little slips of pasteboard were good for twenty-one hundred dollars.

Somebody had blundered, happily. Stewart had got the names mixed, or the ticket seller had understood him to say *Gath*; the names were so similar in their phonetics, and there would have been such a din of bettors' voices. This thing of getting a ticket on the wrong horse happened quite often, Delilah knew that. It was so like her kid husband. Stewart was not a man devoted to detail; he would never bother to check up the numbers of his tickets, and—she shuddered—if he had not been saving them to show her, he would have torn them up. Then nobody would have profited by this stroke of blind luck. If he had discovered, by chance, his miracle, he would have said nothing about the money to Delilah—it would only supply a stake for a joy-ride into high life. Tootie

with twenty-one hundred dollars in his pocket, and Vida in the offing!

What an escape! And now the Vida episode had simplified; Stewart hadn't even the hundred in his pocket that Delilah had fancied he was holding out for Vida; the party was off.

She smiled grimly. Lucky for Stewart that he had someone to look after him. She would bank this money in her own account—her Home Fund, as she called it.



Date Due

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Fraser, William Alexander
Delilah plays the ponies

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